

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

RITUAL GESTURES OF LIFTING, EXTENDING, AND CLASPING THE HAND(S)
IN NORTHWEST SEMITIC LITERATURE AND ICONOGRAPHY

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF THE HUMANITIES
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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF NEAR EASTERN LANGUAGES AND CIVILIZATIONS

BY

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Abbreviations

ABSA	British School of Archaeology in Athens
AHw	Wolfram von Soden, <i>Akkadisches Handwörterbuch</i> (3 vols.; Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1965-1981)
Aleppo	Aleppo National Museum
Amiet, SC	Pierre Amiet, <i>Sceaux-cylindres en hématite et pierres diverses</i> (Ras Shamra-Ougarit 9; Paris: Éditions Recherche sur les Civilisations, 1992)
Amman	Archaeological Museum of Jordan, Amman
ANEP	James B. Pritchard, <i>The Ancient Near East in Pictures Relating to the Old Testament</i> (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1954)
ANESTP	James B. Pritchard, ed., <i>The Ancient Near East: Supplementary Texts and Pictures Relating to the Old Testament</i> (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1969)
ANET	James B. Pritchard, ed., <i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament</i> (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1969)
Ankara	Museum of Anatolian Civilizations, Ankara
Antakya	Antakya Museum
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament (series)
AOB	Hugo Gressmann, <i>Altorientalische Bilder zum Alten Testament</i> (Berlin and Leipzig: Walter de Gruyter, 1927)
Athens	Athens National Archaeological Museum
AUB	American University of Beirut Museum
Avigad, Corpus	Nahman Avigad and Benjamin Sass, <i>Corpus of West Semitic Stamp Seals</i> (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1997)
BA	<i>The Biblical Archaeologist</i>
Barnett, CNI	Richard D. Barnett, <i>A Catalogue of the Nimrud Ivories with Other Examples of Ancient Near Eastern Ivories in the British Museum</i> (London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1957)
BASOR	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
BDB	Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, <i>The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon</i> (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1999)
Beirut	Beirut National Museum
Berlin Äg	Berlin Staatliche Museen, Ägyptische Abteilung
Berlin VA	Berlin Staatliche Museen, Vorderasiatisches Museum (formerly Berlin-Ost Vorderasiatisches Museum)

- Beyer, *Sceaux* Dominique Beyer, *Emar IV: Les sceaux* (OBO, Series Archaeologica 20; Fribourg and Göttingen: University Press and Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2001)
- BHS Karl Elliger and Wilhelm Rudolph, eds., *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (Fourth edition; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1977)
- BIFA Institut Francais d'Archeologie, Beirut
- BIFAO *Bulletin de l'Institut français de'archéologie orientale*
- Birmingham City Museum and Art Gallery, Birmingham
- BISI British Institute for the Study of Iraq, formerly British School of Archaeology in Iraq (BSAI), London
- BLM Bible Lands Museum, Jerusalem
- BM British Museum, London
- Brussels Koninklijke Musea voor Kunst en Geschiedenis, Brussels
- BSMV Präh Berlin Staatliches Museum für Völkerkunde, Prähistorische Abteilung
- Buchanan, *AM 1* Briggs Buchanan, *Catalogue of Ancient Near Eastern Seals in the Ashmolean Museum, Volume 1: Cylinder Seals* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966)
- Buchanan, *YBC* Briggs Buchanan, *Early Near Eastern Seals in the Yale Babylonian Collection* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981)
- Bunnens Guy Bunnens, *A New Luwian Stele and the Cult of the Storm-God at Til Barsib-Masuwari* (Louvain: Peeters, 2006)
- CAD* *The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago* (Chicago: Oriental Institute, 1956-2010)
- Calabria Museo Archaeologico, Reggio Calabria
- CAntik Copenhagen Antiksamlingen
- Caquot and Sznycer, *UR* André Caquot and Maurice Sznycer, *Ugaritic Religion* (Leiden: Brill, 1980)
- CGM* Ora Negbi, *Canaanite Gods in Metal: An Archaeological Study of Ancient Syro-Palestinian Figurines* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv Institute of Archaeology, 1976)
- CHLI* Halet Çambel and John David Hawkins, *Corpus of Hieroglyphic Luwian Inscriptions* (2 vols. in 4 parts; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2000)
- Cleveland Cleveland, Ohio, Museum of Art
- CNCG Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen
- Collon, *ACS* Dominique Collon, *The Alalakh Cylinder Seals* (Oxford: B.A.R., 1982)
- Collon, *FI* Dominique Collon, *First Impressions: Cylinder Seals in the Ancient Near East* (London: British Museum, 1987)

Collon, SITA	Dominique Collon, <i>The Seal Impressions from Tell Atchana/Alalakh</i> (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1975)
Contenau, Manuel	Georges Contenau, <i>Manuel d'archéologie orientale</i> (4 vols; Paris: A. Picard, 1927-1947)
Cornelius, ICGRB	Izak Cornelius, <i>The Iconography of the Canaanite Gods Reshef and Ba'al: Late Bronze and Iron Age I Periods (c 1500-1000 BCE)</i> (OBO 140; Fribourg and Göttingen: University Press and Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994)
COS	W. W. Hallo, ed., <i>The Context of Scripture</i> (3 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 2003)
CSD	R. Payne Smith, <i>A Compendious Syriac Dictionary</i> , ed. J. Payne Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1902)
Damascus	Damascus National Museum
DCH	David J. A. Clines, ed., <i>The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew</i> (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993-2007)
De Clercq	De Clercq collection, Paris
Delphi	Delphi Archaeological Museum
DJD	Discoveries in the Judean Desert (series)
DNWSI	J. Hoftijzer and K. Jongeling, <i>Dictionary of the North-West Semitic Inscriptions</i> (Leiden: Brill, 1995)
DULAT	Gregorio Del Olmo Lete and Joaquín Sanmartín, <i>A Dictionary of the Ugaritic Language in the Alphabetic Tradition</i> (Leiden: Brill, 2004)
Durham	Gulbenkian Museum of Art, Durham
EIM	Eretz-Israel Museum, Tel Aviv (formerly Haaretz Museum)
ETL	<i>Ephemerides theologicae lovanienses</i>
Faulkner	Raymond O. Faulkner, <i>A Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian</i> (Oxford: Griffith Institute, 2002)
Florence	Museo Archeologico, Florence
Frankfort, CS	Henri Frankfort, <i>Cylinder Seals: A Documentary Essay on the Art and Religion of the Ancient Near East</i> (London: Macmillan, 1939)
Gimbel	Colonel Richard Gimbel collection
Giveon, ESWA	Raphael Giveon, <i>Egyptian Scarabs from Western Asia from the Collections of the British Museum</i> (OBO, Series Archaeologica 3; Fribourg and Göttingen: Universitätsverlag and Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1985)
Giveon, SRE	Raphael Giveon, <i>Scarabs from Recent Excavations in Israel</i> (OBO 83; Fribourg and Göttingen: Universitätsverlag and Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1988)
GKC	W. Gesenius, <i>Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar</i> , 2 nd edition, ed. E. Kautsch, transl. A. E. Cowley (Oxford, 1910)
Haifa	University of Haifa, Reuben and Edith Hecht collection

<i>HALOT</i>	L. Koehler, W. Baumgartner, and J. J. Stamm, <i>The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> , transl. and ed. M. E. J. Richardson (4 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 1994-1999)
Hammade	Hamido Hammade, <i>Cylinder Seals from the Collections of the Aleppo Museum, Syrian Arab Republic, 1. Seals of Unknown Provenience</i> (Oxford: B.A.R., 1987)
Harvard	Harvard University Fogg Art Museum
HebU	Hebrew University, Jerusalem
Hildesheim	Pelizaeus Museum, Hildesheim
IAA	Israel Antiquities Authority (formerly Israel Department of Antiquities), Jerusalem
<i>IB</i>	George A. Buttrick, ed., <i>The Interpreter's Bible</i> (12 vols.; New York: Abingdon Press, 1951-1957)
<i>IBHS</i>	B. K. Waltke and M. O'Connor, <i>An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax</i> (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990)
<i>IEJ</i>	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>
IM	Iraq Museum, Baghdad
IN I-VI	Ivories from Nimrud (series), vols. I-VI
<i>ISBE</i>	Geoffrey W. Bromiley, ed., <i>The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia</i> (4 vols.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982)
Istanbul	Istanbul Archaeological Museum
JAI	Albright Institute of Archaeological Research, Jerusalem
<i>JANES</i>	<i>Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society of Columbia University</i>
<i>JAOS</i>	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
Jastrow	M. Jastrow, <i>A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature</i> , 2 nd edition (New York, 1903)
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JEA</i>	<i>Journal of Egyptian Archaeology</i>
<i>JJS</i>	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
<i>JNES</i>	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
Joüon	P. Joüon, <i>A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew</i> , translated and revised by T. Muraoka, second, revised printing (2 vols.; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1993)
<i>JSS</i>	<i>Journal of Semitic Studies</i>
<i>JSSEA</i>	<i>Journal of the Society for the Study of Egyptian Antiquities</i>
<i>KAI</i>	H. Donner and W. Röllig, <i>Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften</i> (3 vols.; Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1976)

Keel, Corpus I-III	Othmar Keel, <i>Corpus der Stempelsiegel-Amulette aus Palästina/Israel: Von den Anfängen bis zur Perserzeit</i> (4 vols.; OBO 10, 13, 29, 31; Fribourg: Academic Press, 1995-2010), Katalog Band I-III (OBO 13, 29, 31)
KJV	King James Version of the Bible (1611)
KTU	M. Dietrich, O. Loretz, and J. Sanmartín, eds., <i>Die keilalphabetischen Texte aus Ugarit</i> (Neukirchen: Verlag Butzon & Bercker Kevalaer, 1976)
LACMA	Los Angeles County Museum of Art
Lane	E. W. Lane, <i>An Arabic-English Lexicon</i> (8 vols.; reprint London, 1968)
LdÄ	<i>Lexikon der Ägyptologie</i>
LIA	London (University) Institute of Archaeology
LSJ	Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, and Henry Stuart Jones, <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> , 9 th edition with revised supplement (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996)
Manchester	Manchester Museum, University of Manchester
Marcopoli	Marcopoli collection, as published by Beatrice Teissier, <i>Ancient Near Eastern Cylinder Seals from the Marcopoli Collection</i> (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1984)
Markoe, Bowls	Glenn Markoe, <i>Phoenician Bronze and Silver Bowls from Cyprus and the Mediterranean</i> (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985)
MFA	Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
MMA	Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
Montreal	Montreal Fine Arts Museum
Moore	Moore collection, as published by Gustavus A. Eisen, <i>Ancient Oriental Cylinder and Other Seals with a Description of the Collection of Mrs. William H. Moore</i> (OIP 47; Chicago, 1940)
Moussaieff	S. Moussaieff collection, London
NBC	Nies Babylonian Collection at Yale University
NCBS	Newell Collection of Babylonian Seals at Yale University
Negbi	Ora Negbi, <i>Canaanite Gods in Metal: An Archaeological Study of Ancient Syro-Palestinian Figurines</i> (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv Institute of Archaeology, 1976)
Newell	portion of NCBS published by H. von der Osten, <i>Ancient Oriental Seals in the Collection of Edward T. Newell</i> (OIP 22; Chicago, 1934)
NIB	<i>The New Interpreter's Bible</i>
Nicosia	Nicosia Cyprus Museum
NIV	New International Version of the Bible (1984)
NJB	New Jerusalem Bible (1985)
NN	no museum number given in published sources
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version of the Bible (1989)

OBO	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis (series)
OI	Oriental Institute Museum, Chicago
OIP	Oriental Institute Publications (series)
Palermo	Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Palermo
PBN	Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris
PMB	Musée biblique de Bible et Terre Sainte, Paris
PML	Pierpont Morgan Library, New York
PMPP	Musée du Petit Palais, Paris
PTS	Pittsburgh Theological Seminary
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue biblique</i>
<i>RdA</i>	<i>Reallexikon der Assyriologie</i>
Reshef	M. Reshef collection, Kibbutz Bet-Alpha, Israel
RMVG	Museo di Villa Giulia, Rome
Rockefeller	Rockefeller Museum (formerly Palestine Archaeological Museum), Jerusalem
ROM	Royal Ontario Museum of Archaeology, Toronto
Rosen	J. Rosen collection, New York
RSV	Revised Standard Version of the Bible (1952)
<i>SAF</i>	Helga Seeden, <i>The Standing Armed Figurines in the Levant</i> (München: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1980)
Samos	Samos Vathy Archaeological Museum
SAOC	Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization (series)
Seeden	Helga Seeden, <i>The Standing Armed Figurines in the Levant</i> (München: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1980)
<i>SSI</i>	J. C. L. Gibson, <i>Textbook of Syrian Semitic Inscriptions</i> (3 vols; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973-1979)
Sydney	Sydney University
<i>TDOT</i>	G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, eds., and John T. Willis, transl., <i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i> (15 vols; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974-)
TIVFU	Institut für Vor- und Frühgeschichte der Universität, Tübingen
<i>TLZ</i>	<i>Theologische Literaturzeitung</i>
Tokyo	Middle Eastern Culture Center in Japan, Tokyo
TTS	Theban Tombs Series
Tyszkiewicz	Tyszkiewicz Collection, Paris

UCL	University College, London
<i>UF</i>	<i>Ugarit-Forschungen</i>
UPenn	University of Pennsylvania Museum, Philadelphia
<i>Urk</i>	Kurt Sethe et al., <i>Urkunden des ägyptischen Altertums</i> (Leipzig and Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1904-1961)
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
WÄS	Adolf Erman and Hermann Grapow, <i>Wörterbuch der ägyptischen Sprache</i> (5 vols.; Berlin: J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1926-1931)
Wehr	H. Wehr, <i>A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic</i> , ed. J. M. Cowan (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1979)
YBC	Yale Babylonian Collection
Yon, <i>SP</i>	Marguerite Yon, <i>Stèles de pierre</i> , in <i>Arts et industries de la pierre</i> , ed. Marguerite Yon (Ras Shamra-Ougarit 6; Paris: Éditions Recherche sur les Civilisations, 1991), 273-343
<i>ZA</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und vorderasiatische Archäologie</i>
<i>ZAW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1. Orientation to Northwest Semitic Ritual Hand Gestures

In 1955, John L. Austin delivered a series of lectures at Harvard University; these lectures, later published as a book entitled *How to Do Things with Words*, explored the use of language to accomplish change in the socially constructed environment, beyond simply making predications about states of affairs.¹ This work by Austin made visible to the scholarly world the phenomenon of the “performative utterance,” a speech form that accomplishes something in and through the speech form itself, for example “I promise.”² More broadly, Austin and many others, such as Mikhail Bakhtin and Erving Goffman, have called attention to various ways in which language (spoken and written) participates in the manipulation of social relations and the creative structuring of one’s world.³

Hand gestures parallel speech both in the potential to represent things symbolically and in the potential to “do things” in the overall enterprise of shaping the cultural environment.⁴ The central use of gestures in this second function of shaping the cultural environment is one of the

¹ John L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1975).

² This example is from Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, 9.

³ See the discussion of “illocutionary” and “perlocutionary acts” in Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, 98-132; Bakhtin’s essay on “Discourse in the Novel,” in Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 259-422; Erving Goffman, “On Face-Work: An Analysis of Ritual Elements in Social Interaction,” *Psychiatry* 18 (1955): 213-31; and Erving Goffman, “Footing,” *Semiotica* 25 (1979): 1-29; cf. Michael Silverstein, “‘Cultural’ Concepts and the Language-Culture Nexus,” *Current Anthropology* 45 (2004): 621-52.

⁴ Bernard J. Hibbitts, “‘Coming to Our Senses’: Communication and Legal Expression in Performance Cultures,” *Emory Law Journal* 41 (1992): 905-24; Adam Kendon, “Gesture,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 26 (1997): 110-15; John B. Haviland, “Gesture,” in *A Companion to Linguistic Anthropology*, ed. Alessandro Duranti (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004), 204-5.

elements that constitute ritual behavior.⁵ Examples of ritual hand gestures in modern times include the following:

1. Placing the right hand on the Bible while taking an oath (a traditional practice in courts of law in Great Britain and the United States);⁶
2. The “Scout Sign” used among the Boy Scouts when reciting the Scout Oath or the Scout Law: raising the right hand to the square, the thumb holding down the little finger, the other three fingers extended and held close together;⁷
3. The Roman Catholic “sign of the cross,” in which the right hand traces the shape of a cross in front of the chest;⁸
4. The Hindu and Buddhist *mudra*, codified ritual gestures featuring in mythology, traditional dance, and iconography;⁹
5. Joining one’s palms, the fingers close together and pointing upward, in Christian prayer (current since the thirteenth century CE in the West);¹⁰
6. Gestures used in Islamic prayer, including raising the hands with the palms outward, raising them with the palms inward, and clasping them in front of the torso;¹¹
7. The Jewish “priestly blessing” gesture: both hands raised, thumbs touching each other, the other fingers in fork shape (with little and ring fingers held

⁵ Roy Rappaport, “The Obvious Aspects of Ritual,” in *Ecology, Meaning, and Religion* (Richmond, California: North Atlantic Books, 1979), 177-79. It is well known that the precise definition of ritual is elusive; indeed, as Catherine Bell has pointed out, the function of ritual in transforming the ritual contexts themselves may explain why these behaviors so persistently elude attempts at categorization. See Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 90-91, 140-41. For this reason, our judgment of what does and does not count as a “ritual gesture” rests not on the type of behavior in which the gesture participates, but rather on the high degree of socially creative functionality in the gesture itself.

⁶ This practice is no longer required in U. S. courts of law, although some state statutes expressly permit the practice, along with other procedures appropriate to non-Christian faiths. See Eugene R. Milhizer, “So Help Me Allah: An Historical and Prudential Analysis of Oaths as Applied to the Current Controversy of the Bible and Quran in Oath Practices in America,” *Ohio State Law Journal* 70 (2009): 1-71.

⁷ Boy Scouts of America, *Boy Scout Handbook*, seventh edition (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Boy Scouts of America, 1965), 54, with accompanying illustration; other illustrations and references to the Scout Sign are found throughout the volume.

⁸ John F. Sullivan, *The Visible Church*, third edition (New York: P. J. Kennedy and Sons, 1922), 119-20; C. Meinberg, “Cross,” in *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (San Francisco: Catholic University of America, 1967), 4:475, 478-79; Michael Silverstein, “‘Cultural’ Concepts,” 626-27.

⁹ Ananda K. Coomaraswamy and Duggirala Gopalakrishnayya, *The Mirror of Gesture: Being the Abhinaya Darpana of Nandikesvara* (New York: E. Weyhe, 1936); Ernest Dale Saunders, *Mudrā: A Study of Symbolic Gestures in Japanese Buddhist Sculpture* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1960); La Meri, *The Gesture Language of the Hindu Dance* (New York: Benjamin Blom, Inc., 1964).

¹⁰ See Elochukwu E. Uzukwu, *Worship as Body Language: Introduction to Christian Worship, An African Orientation* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1997), 22; Clifford Davidson, “Gesture in Medieval British Drama,” in *Gesture in Medieval Drama and Art*, ed. Clifford Davidson (Western Michigan University: Medieval Institute Publications, 2001), 83-84, 118n81.

¹¹ See Joseph Chelhod, “Les attitudes et les gestes de la prière rituelle dans l’Islam,” *Revue de l’histoire des religions* 156 (1959): 161-88.

- close together, ring and middle fingers parted from each other, middle and index fingers held close together, thumbs extended);¹²
8. The Greek Orthodox blessing gesture: the right hand raised, palm outward, the ring finger touching the thumb, the other fingers extended;¹³
 9. The Christian “imposition of hands” used in ordination, in which the officiator’s hands are placed on the head of the one being ordained;¹⁴
 10. The handclasp (*muṣāfaḥa*) that accompanies the oath of induction into a Sufi order.¹⁵

Ritual gestures comparable to those listed above were also present in ancient Northwest Semitic society as represented in texts, including Ugaritic literature and the Hebrew Bible. One such gesture is mentioned in Isaiah 1:15:

When you spread out your palms, I will hide my eyes from you; even as you keep on praying, I am not listening. Your hands are full of blood!

The gesture of “spreading out the palms” here is evidently a gesture used to accompany prayer; it is comparable in this respect to the palms-joined hand position of Christian prayer and to the variety of gestures used in Islamic prayer (nos. 5 and 6 in the list above). Other examples of ritual hand gestures in Northwest Semitic texts include extending the hand to exert supernatural power against a target, raising one hand to take an oath or enter into a covenant, and clasping hands with another to form a privileged covenant relationship. In addition to textual sources,

¹² Louis Jacobs, “The Body in Jewish Worship: Three Rituals Examined,” in *Religion and the Body*, ed. Sarah Coakley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 84-86.

¹³ The equivalent Roman Catholic gesture is different: the thumb, index finger, and middle finger are extended, while the other two fingers are bent downward. For both gestures, see Betty J. Bäuml and Franz H. Bäuml, *Dictionary of Worldwide Gestures*, second edition (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1997), 263-65.

¹⁴ Arnold Ehrhardt, “Jewish and Christian Ordination,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 5 (1954): 125-38; Everett Ferguson, “Laying On of Hands: Its Significance in Ordination,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 26/1 (1975): 1-12. For antecedents of this gesture in ancient Israel and in the New Testament, see David Flusser, “Healing through the Laying-on of Hands in a Dead Sea Scroll,” *Israel Exploration Journal* 7 (1957): 107-8; René Péter, “L’imposition des mains dans l’ancien testament,” *Vetus Testamentum* 27/1 (1977): 48-55; David Wright, “The Gesture of Hand Placement in the Hebrew Bible and in Hittite Literature,” *JAOS* 106 (1986): 433-46; Stephen Finlan, *The Background and Contents of Paul’s Cultic Atonement Metaphors* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 86-93; Clayton Robinson, *The Laying On of Hands, with Special Reference to the Reception of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament* (Fuller Theological Seminary dissertation, 2008).

¹⁵ J. Spencer Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 171, 182, 186-87; Ahmet T. Karamustafa, *Sufism: The Formative Period* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 20.

Northwest Semitic art from the Levant, including stelae, carved ivories, cylinder seals, stamp seals, and pendants show hand gestures being performed in similar contexts.

The present study addresses two kinds of questions arising from gestures such as these. First, we will be concerned with the realia of these gestures: what they looked like, who performed them, the kinds of ritual contexts in which they were used, what kinds of speech accompanied their use, what other gestures and postures were used in combination with them, and what physical objects might be held in the gesturing hand. Second, we will explore the meaning of these gestures for those who used them anciently: what symbolic values were attached to them, how the functions of these gestures contrasted one with another, and how these gestures contributed to the maintenance and creation of social relations in Northwest Semitic society. Related to this second area of inquiry, we will also be concerned with the potential contributions of this material to the wider field of the anthropological study of ritual.

1.2. History of Scholarship on Northwest Semitic Ritual Hand Gestures

Many scholars have contributed studies that, to a greater or lesser degree, take into account ritual hand gestures in Northwest Semitic sources. As may be expected, the majority of these studies are oriented to biblical hermeneutics. The earliest work approaching a systematic study of ritual gestures in the Hebrew Bible is Heinrich Vorwahl's dissertation, entitled *Die Gebärdensprache im Alten Testament* and published in 1932.¹⁶ Vorwahl's study is organized by the expressive or purposive motivations of the gestures he discusses: "Äußerungen der Freude," "Schmerz und Trauer," "Die Furcht," "Zorn," "Grüßformen," "Der Eid," "Fluch und Verachtung," "Der Segen," "Das Gebet." This assumes that the motivations of gestures are primary (each gesture being uniquely classifiable by its motivation) and unproblematic (each

¹⁶ Heinrich Vorwahl, *Die Gebärdensprache im Alten Testament* (Berlin: Emil Ebering, 1932).

motivation category being unquestioned, a preexistent ground on which the study may proceed). We shall see that these assumptions are to be rejected. Vorwahl regards most ritual gestures as means of transmitting magical power or *mana*, an idea that has fallen out of favor since his study, although its suitability withstands scrutiny in some cases (see chapter 5 herein). Vorwahl's study has been criticized for being generally uncritical and sometimes self-contradictory.¹⁷

Hans Peter L'Orange devotes one chapter of his book, *Studies on the Iconography of Cosmic Kingship in the Ancient World* (1953), to the topic of "The Gesture of Power: Cosmocrator's Sign."¹⁸ Unlike Vorwahl, L'Orange orients his work not so much to biblical exegesis but rather to the meaning of gestures in Byzantine iconography. Nevertheless, his conclusions impact the understanding of Northwest Semitic gestures. He explains the gesture of the emperor and of Christ in Byzantine iconography, the hand lifted to chest level or higher with the palm facing outward, with recourse to older Egyptian and Greek iconography and to Yahweh's destructive gesture mentioned repeatedly in the Hebrew Bible. L'Orange's study is significant for at least two reasons. First, his is the first extensive study to relate biblical gestures to ancient iconographic sources. Second, his conclusions regarding the function of Yahweh's hostile hand gesture in the Hebrew Bible basically support Vorwahl's analysis, yet they also contribute some new insights, such as the iconic link between God's gesture and that of his mortal representative (see chapter 5). L'Orange's approach also has its shortcomings. Like Vorwahl, L'Orange amasses supporting evidence uncritically, giving no argumentation as to whether his textual sources refer, in fact, to the same gesture as that depicted in his iconographic sources. This leaves in doubt the equation of the palm-outward gesture with Yahweh's gesture of

¹⁷ Mayer Gruber, *Aspects of Nonverbal Communication in the Ancient Near East* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1980), 13-14.

¹⁸ Hans Peter L'Orange, *Studies on the Iconography of Cosmic Kingship in the Ancient World* (New Rochelle, New York: Caratzas Brothers, 1982 [originally Oslo and Cambridge, 1953]), 139-70.

destruction; indeed, following our synthesis in chapter 4, one might wonder if the palm-outward gesture in Byzantine art is to be connected with a generally performative rather than destructive gesture in the Northwest Semitic sphere (if there is a historical connection with Northwest Semitic culture at all). Also, in his discussion of the biblical gesture, L'Orange relies exclusively on the Septuagint. This obscures differences in the Hebrew phrases used to describe the gesture, resulting in the inclusion of some gestures that are not necessarily to be linked with Yahweh's destructive gesture.

Zeev Falk, in a very brief article published in 1959, argues that the lifting of the hand to make an oath is a variant of the performative handclasp, the latter being proper to performative acts of rendering judgment in the legal sphere.¹⁹ Falk is the first to suggest a concrete legal context for these two gestures. He is also the first to connect the two gestures on the axis of contact vs. non-contact. In connecting the two gestures in this way, Falk raises the issue of formal contrast between gestures in the same cultural repertoire. For Falk, the contrast of contact vs. non-contact corresponds to the human or divine nature (and thus the visible or invisible location) of the one to whom the gesture is directed, but other interpreters understand the significance of this contrast differently (see below).

Paul Humbert's 1962 study of the phrases *šālah yād* "stretch out the hand" and *nāṭṭ^h yād* "extend the hand" provides a paragon of the philological analysis of gestures.²⁰ Humbert gathers every example of these two phrases, compares them systematically according to their distribution in the biblical text and their use with various prepositions, and then proceeds to a careful assessment of their meaning. He concludes that the two phrases denote, respectively, "un geste préhensif, le plus souvent hostile, mais essentiellement humain (*šālah yād*), et un geste indicatif,

¹⁹ Zeev W. Falk, "Gestures Expressing Affirmation," *JSS* 4/3 (1959): 268-69.

²⁰ Paul Humbert, "Etendre la main," *VT* 12/4 (1962): 383-95.

proprement et exclusivement divin de la main dirigée, pointée pour un châtement (*nāṭā yād*).”²¹

Humbert’s study stands out in the history of Northwest Semitic gesture studies as the first to use a rigorous philological approach. His analysis of the destructive gesture most frequently denoted by the phrase *nōṭō^h yād* is basically in line with the interpretations of Vorwahl and L’Orange (although he does not mention these previous studies) and remains the best assessment of the gesture’s function, supported as it is by a comprehensive and systematic treatment of the Hebrew data. Even so, some details of Humbert’s analysis have been shown in later studies to be flawed, especially the strict assignment of the two phrases to the human and divine spheres respectively.²² The essence of these later critiques is that Humbert errs when he tries to fit all the examples of a given phrase into a single neat category.

In a series of studies published between 1967 and 1995, Johan Lust has presented an extensive analysis of the phrase *nōṣō’ yād* “lift up the hand,” in which he argues that the sense of this phrase is “entrer en action en faveur ou au détriment de quelqu’un.”²³ The phrase occurs frequently in references to Yahweh’s covenant concerning the promised land; in these instances, the gesture had previously been understood as one of oath-taking. Lust’s interpretation of this phrase has come under major critique, and most interpreters today do not consider it tenable, although a few more recent studies have adopted it.²⁴ As we shall see in chapter 2, the

²¹ Ibid., 392.

²² Othmar Keel, *Wirkmächtige Siegeszeichen im Alten Testament: Ikonographische Studien zu Jos 8:18-26; Ex 17:8-13; 2 Kön 13:14-19 und 1 Kön 22:11* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1974), 155-57; P. R. Ackroyd, “*yād*,” in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 424-26.

²³ Johan Lust, “Ez., XX, 4–26 une parodie de l’histoire religieuse d’Israël,” *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 43 (1967): 516–26; idem, *Traditie, Redactie en Kerygma bij Ezechiël: Een Analyse van Ez., XX, 1-26* (Brussels: Paleis der Academiën, 1969), 147-73; idem, “For I Lift Up My Hand to Heaven and Swear: Deut 32:40,” in *Studies in Deuteronomy in Honour of C. J. Labuschagne on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday*, ed. F. Garcia Martinez et al. (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 155-64; idem, “The Raised Hand of the Lord in Deut 32:40 according to MT, 4QDeut-q, and LXX,” in *Textus: Studies of the Hebrew University Bible Project, Volume XVIII*, ed. Alexander Rofé (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1995), 42-45.

²⁴ Those who have adopted it include Giuseppe Bettenzoli, *Geist der Heiligkeit: Traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung des QDŠ-Begriffes im Buch Ezechiël* (Firenze: Istituto di Linguistica e di Lingue Orientali, 1979),

interpretation fails to take into consideration some critical evidence from context and from other textual sources (including the Targums and ancient Egyptian literature). Although Lust's interpretation is ultimately less successful than that of Humbert, the two studies are similar in their approach. Both depend almost exclusively on rigorous philological analysis of the linguistic phrases used to describe gestures. This represents considerable progress compared to previous studies that practically ignored the evidence of the original languages. However, the exclusive dependence on philology also compromises the integrated theoretical perspective that characterized the studies of Vorwahl, L'Orange, and Falk. Indeed, the shortcomings of both Humbert's work and that of Lust may be ascribed to an untempered focus on the linguistic phrase, the gestures themselves being confused with the phrases used to describe them. As a result, Humbert and Lust unrealistically treat all instances of a given gesture phrase as if they describe a single gesture with a single function.

One of the most important modern interpreters of Northwest Semitic hand gestures is Othmar Keel, whose work involves iconographically-informed exegesis of biblical imagery. Keel's book *Die Welt der altorientalischen Bildsymbolik und das Alte Testament: Am Beispiel der Psalmen*, published in 1972, includes a section on "Gebetshaltungen," as well as numerous other comments on gestures throughout the book.²⁵ An English translation of this book, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World: Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Book of Psalms*, was published in 1985, eleven years after Keel had published another important book dealing in

200-201; C. A. Strine, *Sworn Enemies: The Divine Oath, the Book of Ezekiel, and the Polemics of Exile* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2013), 72-97. Those who have argued against the interpretation include Thomas Römer, *Israels Väter: Untersuchungen zur Väterthematik im Deuteronomium und in der deuteronomistischen Tradition* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1990), 492-93; Åke Viberg, *Symbols of Law: A Contextual Analysis of Legal Symbolic Acts in the Old Testament* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1992), 30; Eugene P. McGarry, "The Ambidextrous Angel (Daniel 12:7 and Deuteronomy 32:40): Inner-Biblical Exegesis and Textual Criticism in Counterpoint," *JBL* 124/2 (2005): 211-28.

²⁵ Othmar Keel, *Die Welt der altorientalischen Bildsymbolik und das Alte Testament: Am Beispiel der Psalmen* (Zürich: Benziger Verlag, 1972), 287-301; cf. 85-86, 235-38, 270-76.

large part with hand gestures, *Wirkmächtige Siegeszeichen im Alten Testament: Ikonographische Studien zu Jos 8:18-26; Ex 17:8-13; 2 Kön 13:14-19 und 1 Kön 22:11* (Göttingen, 1974).²⁶

Similarly to Vorwahl, Keel organizes his presentation of gestures in *Symbolism of the Biblical World* by categories such as “The Encounter with the Holy,” “Thanks and Praise,” and “Lamentation and Petition.” However, unlike Vorwahl, he names these categories according to the speech acts that accompany the gestures, these being ordered by their occurrence at various stages in a theophany. The subordination of various gestures to a preconceived schema of categories (whether these categories are defined by expressive function or elements of context) results in losing sight of the multiple functions and contexts that any one gesture might have. Keel’s approach is also characterized by broad comparison of Egyptian, Levantine, and Mesopotamian iconographic sources with the Hebrew Bible. This latter aspect of Keel’s approach has been carried on by his students in the “Fribourg school,” for example by Silvia Schroer and Thomas Staubli, who devote a section of their book *Body Symbolism in the Bible* (2001, original German edition 1998) to “Gestures: The Language of the Hands.”²⁷ While this approach is not always applied indiscriminately, the general absence of an articulated methodology leaves one in doubt as to the value of the interpretive results, particularly when these results are compared with other, equally viable interpretations.²⁸

²⁶ Othmar Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World: Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Book of Psalms* (New York: Crossroad, 1985); Othmar Keel, *Wirkmächtige Siegeszeichen im Alten Testament: Ikonographische Studien zu Jos 8:18-26; Ex 17:8-13; 2 Kön 13:14-19 und 1 Kön 22:11* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1974).

²⁷ Silvia Schroer and Thomas Staubli, *Body Symbolism in the Bible* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2001), 150-58; discussion relevant to gestures is also found elsewhere in the chapter, pp. 150-80.

²⁸ Cf. Izaak J. de Hulster, *Iconographic Exegesis and Third Isaiah* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 2: “Whenever biblical scholars link texts with images, the question arises whether these links are legitimate or not. What is the methodological basis for explaining Old Testament texts in the light of ancient Near Eastern images? These questions have largely remained unanswered in biblical studies. Case studies may contain their contextual argumentations; some scholars may present their examples as ‘obvious’. The academic reader of such publications is likely to wish to participate more in the train of thought leading to this obviousness; nevertheless, many of these publications are highly recommended.” De Hulster explicitly cites the “Fribourg School” in this connection. This book by de Hulster is itself a landmark in the development of a methodology for iconographic exegesis. The general

While Othmar Keel exerts a strong influence in the study of ritual gestures among those who specialize in iconographic exegesis, Mayer Gruber exerts a similar influence among those specializing in Semitic philology. Gruber's doctoral dissertation, completed at Columbia University in 1976, was published in 1980 as *Aspects of Nonverbal Communication in the Ancient Near East*.²⁹ In this study, Gruber discusses several phrases used to describe gestures of lifting the hands in prayer, including most prominently *נָסֹב־יָדַיִם* *ʾyodayim* "lift up the hands" and *פָּרָס/פֵּרָס קַפַּיִם* *kappayim* "spread (out) the palms." He organizes his study by expressive or purposive category: "divine worship and supplication," "obeisance," "greeting and affection," "sadness and chagrin," "mourning," and "joy and happiness" (it is the first category that includes the ritual gestures that concern us in the present study). This is similar to Vorwahl, of whose work Gruber is aware.³⁰ However, Gruber differs substantially from Vorwahl in the use of close philological analysis and in the extensive inclusion of Ugaritic and Akkadian evidence. This latter feature is a crux of Gruber's approach: he assumes a commonality between Northwest Semitic and Akkadian nonverbal communication, treating the data from the two spheres as mutually informative. Gruber's exclusive focus on the linguistic phrase is similar to Humbert and Lust; in Gruber's case, this leads to an assumption that the synonymous phrases *נָסֹב־יָדַיִם* and *פָּרָס/פֵּרָס קַפַּיִם* denote two dissimilar gestures (see chapter 3).³¹ Gruber's methods

"itinerary" he proposes is employed in the present study; however, his methodology does not include the concrete categories necessary for a systematic study of gestures (see *ibid.*, 103, and cf. our section 1.5).

²⁹ Mayer Gruber, *Aspects of Nonverbal Communication in the Ancient Near East* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1980).

³⁰ Gruber, *Aspects of Nonverbal Communication*, 13-14.

³¹ An exception to Gruber's strictly philological approach is found in a 1975 study of his on the Akkadian phrase *labān appi*, in which he makes a foray into iconographic evidence from the Mesopotamian sphere. See Mayer Gruber, "Akkadian *labān appi* in the Light of Art and Literature," *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society of Columbia University* 7 (1975): 73-83; reprinted in Mayer Gruber, *The Motherhood of God and Other Studies* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 133-47. However, this study is very limited, focusing on one particular gesture.

have been explicitly adopted by subsequent interpreters, notably Paul Kruger and David Seely.³² Seely's study of the oath gesture denoted by *נָסָה יָד* "lift up the hand," in which he explicitly applies Gruber's methodology, is remarkable for its astute treatment of multiple interpretive possibilities (although Seely does not address the interpretations of Falk or Lust).³³

P. R. Ackroyd includes a significant overview of hand gestures in the Hebrew Bible as part of his entry on the Hebrew words for "hand" in the *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (first published in German in 1977-1980).³⁴ Ackroyd's categories are defined by the convergence of linguistic phrase, form denoted by the phrase, and function. His first three categories of gestures are relevant to the present study: (a) bargaining, pledging, or entering into an agreement by striking hands; (b) raising the hand(s) to take an oath of allegiance or swear an oath in general; (c) extending one hand, a cluster of gestures with "a wide range of meanings," including "a hostile sense." This multifaceted approach is a breakthrough compared to earlier studies that had forced gestures into categories based exclusively on their expressive or purposive motivations. Ackroyd's reasoning, however, is usually brief and sometimes not overtly expressed at all.

Hugh Nibley, in a large number of brief statements in various books and articles between 1975 and 2005, has developed a significant interpretation of hand gestures in ancient Near Eastern ritual, although the impact of this interpretation has been limited, for the most part, to a narrow group of scholars (namely those associated with Brigham Young University, where

³² Paul A. Kruger, "Nonverbal Communication and Symbolic Gestures in the Psalms," *The Bible Translator* 45/2 (1994): 213-22 (see especially pp. 215-16); David Rolph Seely, "The Raised Hand of God as an Oath Gesture," in *Fortunate the Eyes that See: Essays in Honor of David Noel Freedman in Celebration of His Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Astrid B. Beck et al. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 411-21.

³³ See Seely, "Raised Hand of God," 416-18.

³⁴ P. R. Ackroyd, "יָד," in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 410-17. This English edition does not differ substantially from the German.

Nibley had his career).³⁵ The essential aspect of Nibley's interpretation is that he tends to view ritual gestures as means of approach toward God's presence. Lifting the hand(s) and performing a ritual handclasp are thus interrelated in a sequence of increasing proximity. This represents a different way of understanding the contrast of contact vs. non-contact from that suggested by Falk. Nibley's interaction with the Hebrew Bible and with other sources from the Northwest Semitic milieu is minimal, being only one piece of a much larger comparative net (the sources he treats most frequently are classical Greek and Roman, ancient Egyptian, and early Christian). However, others, such as John Tvedtnes in a 1999 article on "Temple Prayer in Ancient Times," have applied Nibley's approach more extensively to gestures in biblical literature.³⁶

An extensive study on "legal symbolic acts" was produced by Åke Viberg in 1992. Viberg devotes chapters of his study to raising the hand and "shaking the hand."³⁷ This work is a significant addition to the literature on these gestures, although the gestures are treated separately and are not brought together under a unifying theoretical perspective.

In previous studies generally, the interpretation of ritual hand gestures is either treated directly but in brief (a good example being Zeev Falk's article on "Gestures Expressing Affirmation," which sweeps through a variety of gestures in only two pages), or it is relativized to other exegetical priorities. These studies have not elaborated a systematic methodology by

³⁵ Hugh W. Nibley, *The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri: An Egyptian Endowment*, second edition (Salt Lake City: Deseret, 2005) (first edition 1975), 98-101, 373-75, 427-36, 456-57; Hugh W. Nibley, "The Early Christian Prayer Circle," *BYU Studies* 19 (1978): 41-78, reprinted in *Mormonism and Early Christianity*, Collected Works of Hugh Nibley 4 (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1987), 45-99, reprinted again in *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 19/2 (2010): 64-95 (see especially p. 73 in the 2010 reprint); Hugh W. Nibley, "On the Sacred and the Symbolic," in *Temples of the Ancient World: Ritual and Symbolism*, ed. Donald W. Parry (Salt Lake City: Deseret, 1994), 557-58; Hugh W. Nibley, "Temples Everywhere," *Insights* 25/1 (2005): 14.

³⁶ John A. Tvedtnes, "Temple Prayer in Ancient Times," in *The Temple in Time and Eternity*, ed. Donald W. Parry and Stephen D. Ricks (Provo: The Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1999), 81-84. Unpublished studies along the same lines by John Tvedtnes, Stephen Ricks, and others are kept on file at the Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship at Brigham Young University and/or are quoted on blogs.

³⁷ Åke Viberg, *Symbols of Law: A Contextual Analysis of Legal Symbolic Acts in the Old Testament* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1992), 19-44.

which textual and iconographic sources can be integrated and by which comparative data from neighboring civilizations can be put into proper perspective.

An additional problem with previous studies is the lack of dialogue between them. In Gruber's introduction to his book *Aspects of Nonverbal Communication in the Ancient Near East*, he cites a statement from Martha Davis's annotated bibliography of studies on "body movement":

Most of the work in this field is done in relative isolation; there is little continuity of research and few "schools" of study. Consequently, even today a writer may speak of his research as if it were totally original and may regard the field as unexplored. It is important to know what has been done—and there is a surprising wealth of writing on the subject—to benefit from past efforts and to give credit where it is due.³⁸

It is ironic that even as Gruber was producing this study, hoping to overcome the insular nature of previous research in the Near Eastern corner of the field of nonverbal communication, Keel was in the midst of his own work, and neither Gruber nor Keel seems to have been aware of the other's contributions.³⁹ The situation has improved somewhat in the wake of these two influential scholars' works, and one can now speak of "schools" of research on Near Eastern gestures, such as the "Fribourg school" associated with Keel, the cadre of anglophone philologists who adhere to Gruber's approach, and the scholars at Brigham Young University who carry forward the influence of Hugh Nibley. However, even the most careful recent studies enter into dialogue with a few previous contributions at the most, leaving unaddressed the greater part of the scholarship on the topic.

³⁸ Martha Davis, *Understanding Body Movement: An Annotated Bibliography* (New York: Arno Press, 1972), vii; Gruber, *Aspects of Nonverbal Communication*, 5-6.

³⁹ The German edition of Keel's book, *Die Welt der altorientalischen Bildsymbolik und das Alte Testament: Am Beispiel der Psalmen*, was published four years before Gruber's dissertation was completed, and the published version of Gruber's study was likewise available four years before the English edition of Keel's book. Both studies cover the lifting of both hands in prayer and refer to some of the same passages, yet neither source cites the other. As explained above, the two studies have different theoretical orientations, and neither source provides a defense of its own orientation over against the other.

The state of affairs just described, in which interpretive choices are checked neither by a systematic methodology nor by sufficient dialogue with previous work, results in wide variation from one interpretation to the next. Each of these is recognized as being of uncertain value as soon as it is put side-by-side with another. For example, how are we to decide whether the lifting of both hands in prayer is a way of figuratively requesting blessings (as Gruber suggests), a way of warding off or neutralizing danger (as Keel suggests), some combination of these two, or something else entirely? While these interpreters are rather ingenious in adducing Northwest Semitic and comparative sources, their general approach to the meaning of the gestures is nevertheless naive, tending to jump quickly from the data to issues of larger meaning and then quickly moving on. One simply does not find an interpretation that responds adequately to the complexity of the data.

Recent work on ritual gestures in the fields of Assyriology and Classical Studies has achieved new standards of thoroughness and theoretical awareness, exceeding what has been done on this topic in Northwest Semitic studies.⁴⁰ Egyptological syntheses of gestures have also been impressively thorough, although they have not availed themselves of interdisciplinary theoretical perspectives to the same degree as their counterparts in the Assyriological and Greco-Roman fields.⁴¹ There is considerably more work to be done in all these branches of ancient

⁴⁰ For Assyriological studies, see Jamsheed K. Choksy, "In Reverence for Deities and Submission to Kings: A Few Gestures in Ancient Near Eastern Societies," *Iranica Antiqua* 37 (2002): 7-29; Annette Zgoll, "Audienz: Ein Modell zum Verstaendnis mesopotamischer Handerhebungsrituale," *Baghdader Mitteilungen* 34 (2003): 181-203; Christopher G. Frechette, *Mesopotamian Ritual-Prayers of "Hand-Lifting" (Akkadian Šuillas): An Investigation of Function in Light of the Idiomatic Meaning of the Rubric* (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2012), 11-106, 229-42. For studies on classical Greece and Rome, see Timothy J. McNiven, "Behaving Like an Other: Telltale Gestures in Athenian Vase Painting," in *Not the Classical Ideal: Athens and the Construction of the Other in Greek Art*, ed. Beth Cohen (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 71-97; Catherine M. Keesling, "Misunderstood Gestures: Iconatropy and the Reception of Greek Sculpture in the Roman Imperial," *Classical Antiquity* 24/1 (2005): 41-80; Françoise Létoublon, "Speech and Gesture in Ritual: The Rituals of Supplication and Prayer in Homer," in *Ritual Dynamics in the Ancient Mediterranean: Agency, Emotion, Gender, Representation*, ed. Angelos Chaniotis (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2011), 291-311.

⁴¹ The best synthesis of ancient Egyptian gestures to date is that of Brigitte Dominicus, *Gesten und Gebärden in Darstellungen des Alten und Mittleren Reiches* (Heidelberg: Heidelberger Orientverlag, 1993). Like the earlier

studies in developing appropriate analytic categories, thoroughly gathering data, and synthesizing the various witnesses. The present study seeks to rectify these gaps for a limited set of Northwest Semitic gestures; we also hope that it will provide a stepping-stone for further studies on ritual gestures in the ancient world.

1.3. Contributions of the Present Study

There are three ways in which we intend to contribute to the state of inquiry on ritual hand gestures in the Northwest Semitic world. First, we systematically integrate Northwest Semitic textual and iconographic data. This permits full use to be made of these two equally important witnesses to Northwest Semitic gestures. Previous studies have been impeded in this regard because of the lack of an explicit methodology suited to the purpose of integrating these sources. Our own methodology is explained in section 1.5 below.

Second, we address and bring into dialogue the full range of available interpretations, as far as we are able to discover them. We bring these interpretations to bear at every stage where they are applicable, whether it be the analysis of phrases used to describe gestures in texts, the interpretation of gesture images in iconography, the synthesis of texts and iconography, or broader hermeneutical issues. Where possible, we apply the integrated data to evaluate whether previous interpretations can be refined or are to be rejected.

Third, we present an in-depth study of how these gestures function in their ritual contexts, employing interpretive perspectives from ritual studies and linguistic anthropology. These

studies on Northwest Semitic gestures, Dominicus organizes her presentation by categories of meaning. Her first section is devoted to gestures of “Verehrung, Gruß, Klage, Jubel, Trauer,” and her second section is devoted to “Gesten zu Reden und Rufen.” The choice of categories, the criteria by which the gestures are assigned to them, and the grouping of the categories into larger ones are never directly argued, so the presentation in general appears arbitrary. This study restricts itself to assembling and classifying the data, giving no attention to larger issues that would occasion dialogue with fields outside of Egyptology.

perspectives point the way for the application of semiotic categories (particularly the threefold analysis of the sign as icon, index, and symbol as developed by Charles Sanders Peirce) to cultural productions such as rituals, texts, and artworks as well as to their signifying systems of gestures and languages.⁴² As these perspectives are constructed relative to observation of living societies, they provide heuristic models that might not arise naturally from the textual and iconographic artifacts themselves, such as the ways in which gestures may be used in tandem with speech to shape the symbolically constructed environment, including manipulating the status of participants.⁴³

1.4. Scope

The linguistic, geographical, and chronological focus of the present study is on Northwest Semitic materials from the Middle Bronze Age (ca. 2000-1550 BCE) through the beginning of the Persian Period. Textual sources included in the scope of this study are the Hebrew Bible, Ugaritic texts, and Phoenician and Old Aramaic inscriptions (other potential textual sources, such as Hebrew inscriptions and Imperial Aramaic documents, do not happen to include significant information on hand gestures). Among the relevant iconographic sources are figurines, stelae, carved ivories, cylinder seals, stamp seals, pendants, and metal bowls.

⁴² For the threefold analysis into icon, index, and symbol, see Charles Sanders Peirce, *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, ed. Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1932), 2:156-73. For one application of Peircian categories to ritual, see Richard J. Parmentier, *Signs in Society: Studies in Semiotic Anthropology* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), 128-34. For application of these categories specifically to gestures, see John Haviland, "Gesture," *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 9 (2000): 89-90; compare also the fundamental essay by Michael Silverstein, "Shifters, Linguistic Categories and Cultural Description," in *Meaning in Anthropology*, ed. Keith H. Basso and Henry A. Selby (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1976), 11-55, in which these categories are integrated into a framework for spoken language.

⁴³ Cf. Judith Irvine, "Strategies of Status Manipulation in the Wolof Greeting," in *Explorations in the Ethnography of Speaking*, ed. Richard Bauman and Joel Sherzer, second edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 167-91; Bell, *Ritual Theory*, 140 passim.

Previous studies have included in their scope of inquiry Mesopotamian, Egyptian, later Jewish, Greek, and even Roman gestures. While comparisons in all of these directions are informative, they are also potentially misleading, since pre-Persian Period Northwest Semitic gestures are part of a distinct culture that is not identical with any of these others. Moreover, some cross-cultural comparisons are more informative than others. For example, given the longstanding cultural contact between Egypt and the Levant, including Egyptian political hegemony in some periods, we would expect to find Northwest Semitic gestures to be more closely related to Egyptian gestures than to those of ancient Rome, with which the people of the Levant had very little contact before the third century BCE.⁴⁴ We take care to note comparisons with non-Northwest Semitic material where such comparisons are especially relevant; yet our ultimate appeal in matters of interpretation is to the Northwest Semitic sources themselves, provided that these sources contain sufficient data.

When we began the present study, we set out to include a broad range of Northwest Semitic hand gestures, including those involving lifting or extending the hand(s), opening or shutting the hand(s), touching another's body (such as laying one's hands on the head of another, putting the hand under another's thigh, grasping another's hand, embracing, etc.), contact with clothing (such as touching the hem of another's garment, tearing one's own garment, shaking out one's own garment, etc.), and self-contact (such as putting the hand on one's own head, touching one's own bosom, clapping the hands, hitting one's thigh, etc.). It was our intention to explore meaningful formal contrasts in the nonverbal repertoire, such as inward-directed (self-contact) vs.

⁴⁴ Cf. Adam Kendon, "Geography of Gesture," *Semiotica* 37/1-2 (1981): 129-63. Kendon (*ibid.*, 149-50) reports an observation by Morris et al. that the range of use in Italy of the "head toss" gesture of negation, a gesture also used with the same function in Greece, matches precisely the region that was heavily colonized by Greece in the first millennium BCE. We shall see in chapter 4 that Egyptian gestures often provide the best parallel for those of the Levant, even closer in many cases than those of Mesopotamia, despite the closer linguistic relationship with the latter.

outward-directed, non-contact vs. contact, and high vs. low, viewing the entire gesture repertoire as an interconnected system. As we progressively engaged the data, it became apparent that, barring arbitrary omissions of relevant material, the project would eventually result in a study of extraordinary scope, far too large for a dissertation. Therefore, it became necessary to narrow the focus of inquiry for the present study to a small set of ritual gestures. We chose to focus on those involving the lifting or extending of the hand(s) without contact, and also the clasping of hands with another. Our choice of these particular gestures was based on three factors: (1) ambiguity of some Northwest Semitic phrases, most prominently *nʿtan yad lə* “put forth the hand toward” or “give the hand to,” as to whether an extending of the hand or a clasping of another’s hand is involved—this ambiguity requires dealing with these types of gestures together as an empirical step, in order to sort out what type of gesture is described in each instance; (2) the fact that these types of gestures are amply attested in both textual and iconographic sources (unlike other gestures found in only one type of source, for example the hitting of the thigh attested only in textual sources), which suits our subsidiary purpose of developing a methodology for linking the two types of sources; and (3) the fact that these two types of gestures bring out the formal contrast of non-contact vs. contact, which contrast has played a role in some prior interpretations (see the discussions on Falk and Nibley above).

Our relatively narrow scope of inquiry allows us to be virtually comprehensive in our inclusion of Northwest Semitic texts and art pieces from the specified period. By “virtually comprehensive,” we mean that we have incorporated all relevant sources known to us, persistently seeking out new sources through published collections and computer searches. As far as textual sources go, we are reasonably certain that we have included every published text relevant to our inquiry. In some cases with the iconographic data, particularly with cylinder seals

(for which there is no comprehensive source), we have added sources until reaching a point at which further inclusion becomes overly repetitive and ceases to impact the interpretation.

1.5. Plan and Methodology

Chapters 2 to 4 herein seek to integrate the textual and iconographic data for gestures by establishing matches between linguistic phrases and iconographic gestures. The methodology followed in these chapters hinges on the importance of context in discerning among the gestures that underlie textual descriptions and iconographic depictions. As P. R. Ackroyd has noted in his entry on *ἡδ* “hand” in the *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*,

The wide variety of gestures discussed in this survey suggests both the difficulty of determining the precise nature of each particular one and also the likelihood that in actual life situations the meaning of a gesture would be made clear by its context and also perhaps by words or other circumstances accompanying the gesture. This is evident from the number of instances in which the same expression is used to convey very different meanings. In any case, information concerning the context is needed to determine the meaning of the hands and their gestures.⁴⁵

Here Ackroyd uses the term “meaning” somewhat loosely to refer both to a particular gesture form (as distinguished from another gesture that might be described using the same linguistic phrase) and to the symbolism of a gesture. Others in the camps of philology, iconography studies, and anthropology have also expressed the idea that the functions of ritual gestures are optimally understood when the gestures are viewed as a cohesive whole with their contexts.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Ackroyd, “*ἡδ*,” in *TDOT*, 5:416-17.

⁴⁶ See Mayer Gruber, *Aspects of Nonverbal Communication in the Ancient Near East* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1980), 60-62n2; Michael Wedde, “Talking Hands: A Study of Minoan and Mycenaean Ritual Gesture: Some Preliminary Notes,” in *MELETEMATATA: Studies in Aegean Archaeology Presented to Malcolm H. Wiener as He Enters His 65th Year*, ed. Philip B. Betancourt, Vassos Karageorghis, Robert Laffineur, and Wolf-Dietrich Niemeier (Liege: University of Liege, 1999), 3:913; Bell, *Ritual Theory*, 81.

Provided that two given textual descriptions plausibly refer to a gesture of the same or similar form, context (including who performs the gesture, to whom, in what circumstances, accompanied by what other actions and/or speech, and so on⁴⁷) can be used to determine how likely it is that the two descriptions actually refer to the same gesture. This principle applies both to gesture descriptions sharing the same basic verbal idiom (such as *nʿśw' yʿd* “lift up the hand”), which may refer to different actual gestures, and to diverse idioms potentially used to describe the same gesture. This principle also applies to comparisons between textual descriptions and iconographic depictions: context determines how likely it is that a given idiom (such as *nʿśw' yʿd*) and a given image (such as that of a woman raising her hand with the palm outward) stand for the same gesture.⁴⁸ A systematic comparison of context therefore provides a way of responsibly establishing matches between idioms used in textual sources on the one hand, and between idioms and artistic depictions on the other. The stronger the evident similarity in context, the more plausible the match.

Izaak de Hulster has proposed an “itinerary” for iconographic biblical exegesis, proceeding from textual analysis to search, research, and application of images, and finally to “clarification of the text and substantiation, complementation and correction of its (earlier) interpretations.”⁴⁹ This ensures that the extent of information provided by the two types of sources is properly understood before they are matched. It also puts the two types of sources into a mutually refining dialogue. Our plan in chapters 2 to 4 follows the general outlines of de Hulster’s “itinerary,” proceeding from close internal analysis of textual sources to wider synthesis. In chapter 2, we analyze each phrase used to describe a gesture of raising, extending, or clasping hands. We base our analysis on close readings of the relevant Hebrew, Ugaritic,

⁴⁷ On the specific components of context, see further section 2.1.

⁴⁸ This is elaborated further in section 4.1.

⁴⁹ De Hulster, *Iconographic Exegesis*, 103.

Aramaic, and Phoenician textual sources. Systematic evaluation of context is employed as an analytic tool to separate out uses of the same phrase according to their different contexts. As is shown in that chapter, it is often the case that the use of different prepositions with the same basic idiom corresponds to different broader contextual types and thus to different gestures. For example, *nʿśʿ ʿ yʿd ʿal* “lift up the hand against” belongs to a different context, and is likely a different gesture, from *nʿśʿ ʿ yʿd lə* “lift up the hand to.”⁵⁰

In chapter 3, we employ context as a synthetic rather than an analytic tool, joining together diverse phrases into clusters according to context, each cluster consisting of roughly synonymous idioms belonging to the same context and thus likely describing a single gesture. This synthetic process allows us to treat wider ranges of examples, which in turn allows us to bring a larger number of details about gestures’ form and context to bear in the following chapters. The choice to deal systematically with the textual sources in chapters 2 and 3, before jumping to comparison with iconography, reduces the risk of mismatches based on incorrect readings of the texts.

Chapter 4 is devoted to evaluation of the iconographic evidence for Northwest Semitic gestures. We also seek in that chapter to establish matches between clusters of linguistic phrases (the result of chapter 3) and iconographic depictions. Again, the tool for this synthetic process is systematic comparison of context. The results of chapter 4 enable us to imagine, with some degree of accuracy, Northwest Semitic gestures in their three-dimensional reality, as forms of movement that engage with a variety of contexts.

Finally, in chapter 5, we assemble the various interpretations of the more commonly attested gestures, refining these interpretations and then developing new interpretations based on

⁵⁰ This example is somewhat simplified for the purpose of clarity. For more detail, see the discussion in chapter 2.

a fresh look at the integrated data. We conclude by discussing how our findings contribute to the larger understanding of Northwest Semitic ritual and of ritual traditions in general.

Chapter 2

Gesture Phrases in Northwest Semitic Texts

2.1. Aim and Methodology

The aim of this chapter is to present, in systematic fashion, all the examples of phrases used in Northwest Semitic literature to describe ritual hand gestures that consist of raising the hand(s), extending the hand(s), and clasping hands with another. The systematic organization serves at least two purposes. First, from a philological perspective, it provides a vehicle by which to rigorously analyze the grammatical features of Northwest Semitic phrases used to express gestures (these phrases are herein referred to as “gesture phrases”¹). Second, it is a first step in the process of moving from the verbal representation of a gesture (in the form of a gesture phrase) to a reconstruction of the gesture itself. In this chapter, all the examples of each gesture phrase are sorted according to context in order to separate out what could be homonymous expressions for different gestures. This is done under the assumption that examples of a given gesture phrase in identical or similar contexts stand for the same gesture, while examples in different contexts are likely to represent different gestures.² In chapter 3, the same principle is used to link different

¹ In current literature on gesture, the term “gesture phrase” (or “G-phrase”) is used to describe a series of spontaneous movements of the hands. See Adam Kendon, “Current Issues in the Study of Gesture,” in *The Biological Foundations of Gestures: Motor and Semiotic Aspects*, ed. Jean-Luc Nespoulous, Paul Perron, and André Roch Lecours (n.p.: Psychology Press, 1986), 34; David McNeill, *Hand and Mind: What Gestures Reveal about Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 83. We use the term differently to refer to a verbal phrase that denotes a nonverbal movement. The term seems more precisely suited to this meaning than do the alternative terms “gesture expression” and “gesture idiom.”

² See Mayer Gruber, *Aspects of Nonverbal Communication in the Ancient Near East* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1980), 60-62n2. There Gruber discusses the Akkadian gesture phrase *qāta/qātī našū* “lift the hand/hands,” arguing that it “refers to a series of kinemes, the meaning of each of which is determined by the context.” He continues: “These idioms do not arise from the ambiguity of a single gesture, nor do they arise from a primitive view that the hand embodies the personality...These homonymous idioms have arisen from the inadequacy of words to distinguish a series of distinct culturally significant body motions all of which share in common the feature of elevating one or both hands.” Gruber proceeds to give examples of this idiom in the context of attacking and in the context of praying. See also A. Leo Oppenheim, “Idiomatic Accadian (Lexicographical Researches),” *JAOS* 61 (1941): 251; David Rolph Seely, “The Raised Hand of God as an Oath Gesture,” in *Fortunate the Eyes that See: Essays in Honor*

gesture phrases to each other, determining which gesture phrases are synonymous in a given context. Finally, in chapter 4, sets of synonymous gesture phrases are linked with gestures depicted in art, using a similar principle of comparing contexts. Chapter 5 deals with gestures as reconstructed from the combined verbal and visual data. One of the purposes of chapters 2-4, then, is to provide a basis on which to discuss ancient Northwest Semitic ritual gestures as distinct from gesture phrases.

The presentation in this and succeeding chapters reflects the fact that the Hebrew Bible is by far the richest source of gesture phrases in Northwest Semitic literature. In the Hebrew Bible, thirty gesture phrases and three phrases describing the cessation or redirection of a gesture are distributed in over two hundred textual passages.³ Several of these gesture phrases have more than ten occurrences, and most phrases either have more than one occurrence or are closely related to another phrase with more than one occurrence. In addition to these figures, there are several passages in which the existence or general interpretation of a gesture phrase is uncertain. In contrast, Ugaritic, Aramaic, and Phoenician inscriptions provide some examples of gesture phrases, but a given gesture phrase typically occurs only once or, at best, a few times in a corpus. The value of these other corpora for this topic lies in their providing chronologically and geographically situated examples of gesture phrases otherwise known from the Hebrew Bible. In some cases, a gesture phrase can be found in sources that cover a wide chronological span, providing a diachronic view of the use of that phrase and its underlying gesture in Northwest Semitic culture. A few gesture phrases found in nonbiblical sources have no parallel in the Hebrew Bible, but these phrases occur only once each, so that there is not enough information

of David Noel Freedman in Celebration of His Seventieth Birthday, ed. Astrid B. Beck et al. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 414-15.

³ “Gesture phrase” here refers to the “basic gesture phrase” unmodified by adverbials; this term is explained in more detail below.

from context to say much with certainty about the gesture and its function. For these reasons, the citation forms of gesture phrases in this and the following chapters are transliterated from Masoretic Hebrew, with the verb in each phrase in the perfective aspect, third person masculine singular. This convention is departed from only where the discussion is specific to a given text or in cases where a phrase is not attested in the Hebrew Bible. Where gesture phrases are organized alphabetically, as in the body of this chapter, the order follows that of the Hebrew alphabet.

The approach taken in chapters 2 and 3 of the present study, namely attempting to systematically organize and compare gesture phrases from an ancient body of literature, is new. Therefore, it has been necessary to develop a methodology and technical terms suitable to this approach. This methodology consists, first, of gathering instances of gesture descriptions from literature under the heading of a “basic gesture phrase.” The basic gesture phrase may be compared with the base of a word. It is, in essence, an abstraction from attested instances of gesture descriptions, expressed as a phrase consisting of a verb (or verbal noun or adjective) denoting the movement of a body part or a position, and usually including a noun denoting the body part. In actual instances, the basic gesture phrase is varied through inflection, supplemented by additional words (such as prepositional phrases), and/or shortened (as, for example, when the noun denoting the body part is elided). Because of this variation and occasional gaps in the data, the process of assigning gesture descriptions to a basic gesture phrase is not always free of problems. Nevertheless, the basic gesture phrase is useful as a heuristic means of searching out, organizing, and referring to examples of gesture descriptions.

Second, the examples of gesture descriptions under a given basic gesture phrase are sorted according to context. The following aspects of context are taken into consideration (listed roughly by usual distance from the basic gesture phrase, from more distant to more proximate):

1. Descriptive setting (e.g. narration of hostile encounter, psalmodic call to praise, prophecy of large-scale divine judgments)
2. Words or phrases structurally aligned with the gesture phrase (e.g. through poetic parallelism or repetition within a pericope)
3. Reference or allusion to a specific historical or mythological event
4. Result clause associated with the gesture phrase (what kind of result does it describe?)
5. Quoted speech or reference to speech accompanying the gesture phrase (is there speech? does it include specific formulae or reveal what kind of interaction is taking place?)
6. Purpose clause following the basic gesture phrase (with either a conjoined volitive verb or the preposition *lā* “to” plus infinitive)
7. Adverbial phrases following or (rarely) preceding the basic gesture phrase (with or without prepositions)
8. Agent of the gesture phrase (often expressed as the subject of the gesture clause)

Examples that are similar in all or most of these aspects (as far as they are expressed in the text) are said to belong to a single “contextual type.” For instance, in comparing the contexts of the basic gesture phrase *nāśōʿ yād* “lift up the hand” in Numbers 14:30 and Ezekiel 20:28, we find that the descriptive setting is similar (a prophetic report of divine speech concerning Israel’s inheriting of the promised land). Both verses could have reference to a single event or series of events in which Yahweh took an oath to settle Israel in the land (cf. Exodus 6:8). There is a purpose clause following the gesture phrase in both verses; this clause is introduced by the preposition *lā* “to” followed by an infinitive form of a verb (*šakken* “settle,” *tet* “give”). Finally, the Agent of the gesture phrase in both verses is the same (Yahweh, the subject of the first-person verb forms). The phrase in these two verses can therefore be said to belong to the same contextual type; based on these and other examples, this contextual type can be described as one of oath-taking.⁴

⁴ The recognition of an oath-taking gesture in these passages is not new; see, for example, Seely, “Raised Hand of God,” 412-13. In contrast to this usage in oath contexts, the same basic gesture phrase, *nāśōʿ yād* “lift up the hand,” is also used in 2 Samuel 18:28, but in a different contextual type. The descriptive setting there is a reference to hostile actions by rebels against the king, and the basic gesture phrase is followed not by a purpose clause but by a

A gesture phrase associated with a specific contextual type is described using a “full gesture phrase.” The full gesture phrase, like the basic gesture phrase, is an abstraction from attested instances; however, it differs from the basic phrase in that it includes markers for elements of the contextual type, which markers help to distinguish the phrase from others that belong to different contextual types and that share the same basic gesture phrase. The full phrase consists of the basic gesture phrase plus the minimal number of context markers needed to describe a distinct phrase belonging to a distinct contextual type. These context markers begin with the most proximate element of context following the basic phrase, namely adverbial phrases (number 7 in the list above). The full gesture phrase for *nʿśōʿ yʿd* “lift up the hand” in the contextual type of oath-taking, for instance, includes two phrases beginning with the preposition *lā*, one introducing the person to whom an oath is taken and the other introducing an infinitive purpose clause.⁵

A major problem in dealing systematically with gesture phrases in Northwest Semitic literature is categorizing the semantic roles played by elements of the full gesture phrase. It is evident that some oppositions that are not overtly encoded in the grammar are operative in establishing the meaning of a gesture phrase. For example, we may compare two phrases describing formal gestures, *nʿtan yʿd lišbo^a ʿ ləhem* “put forth the hand to be satisfied with bread” (Lamentations 5:6) and *nʿtan yʿd ləho^wšiy^y ʿ nāše^yhem* “put forth the hand to send away their wives” (Ezra 10:19). It is evident from context (see below) that the object of the preposition *lā* in the first phrase denotes what the person making the gesture expects will be the result of the

prepositional phrase with the preposition *bā* “against.” For citations of these and other relevant passages, along with further discussion of the contexts, see the body of this chapter.

⁵ Note that a given adverbial phrase may not be overtly expressed in every instance of a gesture phrase within a given contextual type, just as the phrase with *lā* followed by the person to whom the oath is taken is not expressed in the examples from Numbers 14:30 and Ezekiel 20:28 described above. The full gesture phrase shows what is found when these adverbial phrases are overt.

gesture, while the object of the same preposition in the second phrase denotes what the person making the gesture is thereby obligated to do. However, even without the larger context, one would assume that being satisfied with bread is an expectation and not an obligation, while sending away one's wife is something one commits to do rather than something one expects to happen. While both examples have the same structure (verb + direct object + preposition *lā* + infinitive clause), they are distinguished by the different semantic roles which the words in the infinitive clause take on.

Assigning semantic roles to clauses describing gesture acts is complicated because the acts themselves are complicated. Gesture acts are simultaneously a type of movement and a type of communication. Therefore, the work of linguists in two areas, namely thematic roles in clauses describing movement and participant roles in speech acts, is relevant. In the following account of models developed in these areas of research, the ways in which these models might apply to phrases describing gesture acts in Northwest Semitic literature are illustrated, for the sake of coherence, by reference to a single passage in the Hebrew Bible, Exodus 8:2:

Exodus 8:2 **wayyeṭ** 'ah^aron 'eṭ-**yādo**^w 'al me^yme^y miṣrōyim watta' al haṣṣəparde^a
wattəkas 'eṭ-'ereṣ miṣrōyim

Then Aaron **extended his hand** against the waters of Egypt, and the frogs came up and covered the land of Egypt.

In the area of thematic roles, scholars have developed a model that works well to describe referential speech involving movement. I will refer to the type of analysis which generates and is informed by this model as “thematic-role analysis.” This model is represented in many works on semantics and syntax.⁶ The summarized version presented here is based on William Frawley,

⁶ See, for example, Charles J. Fillmore, “Types of Lexical Information,” in *Semantics: An Interdisciplinary Reader in Philosophy, Linguistics and Psychology*, ed. Danny D. Steinberg and Leon A. Jakobovits (Cambridge: Cambridge

Linguistic Semantics (1992), who lists and discusses twelve thematic roles (the page numbers in Frawley's book are given in parentheses):

- Agent: "the deliberate, potent, active instigator of the predicate" (p. 203)
- Author: "the sufficient, but not the necessary, cause of the predication" that carries out the action "for noninternal reasons" (p. 206)
- Instrument: "the means by which a predicate is carried out" (p. 208)
- Patient: an argument that "undergoes, is changed by, or is directly affected by a predicate" (p. 210)
- Experiencer: an argument of which the predicate "affects the internal state or constitution" (p. 213)
- Benefactive: an argument that "derive[s] actions or entities from the actions of another" (p. 215)
- Theme: a "displaced entity" that "moves from some resting point along a trajectory, often to another resting point" (p. 218)
- Source: "the point of origin of displacement" (p. 220)
- Goal: "the destination" of a predication (p. 221)
- Locative: "[t]he argument that denotes the spatial position of the predicate" (p. 224)
- Reason: an argument that "denote[s] the prior conditions of a predication," an event or fact that motivates the predication (p. 225)
- Purpose: "the result or consequence of a predicate," the "motivational goals" of the predicate (p. 227)

The roles of Agent, Author, and Instrument are grouped under the heading of "Logical Actors" in a clause, while Patient, Experiencer, and Benefactive are grouped under "Logical Recipients," and Theme, Source, and Goal are grouped under "Spatial Roles." These nine roles, in turn, are all grouped under the category of "Participant Roles," roles that can claim an essential place in a clause and that "generally answer the question, 'Who did what to whom?'" This category is in opposition to "Nonparticipant Roles," including Locative, Reason, and

University Press, 1971), 370-92; Liliane Haegeman, *Introduction to Government and Binding Theory* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1991), 41-47; William Frawley, *Linguistic Semantics* (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., 1992), 203-28.

Purpose, which can be deleted from a clause without affecting the grammaticality of the clause and which “generally answer the question, ‘Why, where, when, and how?’”⁷

Thematic-role analysis would divide Exodus 8:2 into three clauses, each with its own predicate and set of arguments. The gesture phrase itself, which contains the verb *nɔʔɔʔ^h* “he extended,” constitutes the first of the three clauses. There are three arguments: Aaron, the hand, and the waters of Egypt. It is possible to identify Aaron, the subject of the clause, as the Agent.⁸ The hand might be viewed as either the Patient or the Theme of the gesture phrase, since it is directly affected by the verb *nɔʔɔʔ^h* and since it moves from a resting point along an outward and/or upward trajectory. The waters of Egypt do not fit very neatly in any of the categories designated by thematic-role analysis. They fit most closely with the role of Locative, since they follow the preposition *ʿal* “against,”⁹ even though it is questionable that their role is to “denote the spatial position of the predicate.”

In the area of participant roles in speech acts, scholars have developed several models that are each effective in describing particular aspects of communication scenarios. We will refer to the general kind of analysis associated with all of these models as “communication-act analysis.”

⁷ Frawley, *Linguistic Semantics*, 201-2.

⁸ In the previous verse (Exodus 8:1), we learn that Aaron is carrying out an action of which Yahweh (through Moses) is the ultimate instigator. However, the role of Author, which is mainly reserved for inanimate objects like “outfit” in “her strange outfit surprised me” (Frawley, *Linguistic Semantics*, 207), is inappropriate for Aaron.

⁹ Like some other Hebrew prepositions, *ʿal* does not inherently denote directionality; it occurs in contexts in which translations such as “above,” “down upon,” and “up to” are appropriate. See BDB, 752-59; cf. Dennis Pardee, “The Preposition in Ugaritic” (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1974), 280-91. The role of Goal is thus theoretically possible for the waters. However, the description of this role as the “destination” of the predication would imply that the hand eventually reaches the waters, which seems unlikely here. For more discussion of *ʿal* in this idiom, including discussion of the translation as “against,” see below under *nɔʔɔʔ^h yɔd*.

One model of communication-act analysis has developed from the work of Claude E. Shannon and John Lyons.¹⁰ Stephen Levinson has dubbed this model the “Communication Theory Model.”¹¹ This model is notable for its applicability to many forms of communication, including electronic communication between machines, and Lyons specifically mentions gestures among the “signalling systems” by which different channels might be distinguished within this model.¹² The Communication Theory Model includes five named entities along which a message or signal is passed:¹³

Source > Transmitter > Channel > Receiver > Destination

Unlike thematic-role analysis and the other forms of communication-act analysis that are described below, this model provides ready designations for the body parts mentioned in gesture phrases. If the person performing the gesture is understood as the Source in this model, then the body part used in performing the gesture (together with any object used in the gesture) is the Transmitter, and a body part that belongs to the addressee and that figures in the gesture (e.g. the addressee’s hand in a handclasp) is the Receiver. However, this model cannot take the analysis of gesture phrases very far, since there is no means of describing such aspects as referenced third parties or the purpose of the gesture, both of which figure in distinguishing gesture phrases from each other in the Northwest Semitic languages.

¹⁰ Claude E. Shannon and Warren Weaver, *The Mathematical Theory of Communication* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1949), 33-34; John Lyons, *Semantics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 1:36-41.

¹¹ Stephen C. Levinson, “Putting Linguistics on a Proper Footing: Explorations in Goffman’s Concepts of Participation,” in *Erving Goffman: Exploring the Interaction Order*, ed. Paul Drew and Anthony Wootton (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988), 166.

¹² Lyons, *Semantics*, 1:37.

¹³ In the formulation by Shannon in Shannon and Weaver, *Mathematical Theory of Communication*, 33-34, the term “message” is used for the signal sent between the Source and the Transmitter and between the Receiver and the Destination, while the term “signal” is reserved for what is passed from the Transmitter to the Receiver. A different model of communication with many similarities to this one was formulated by Roman Jakobson, “Closing Statement: Linguistics and Poetics,” in *Style in Language*, ed. Thomas A. Sebeok (London: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1960), 353-57.

A second model for communication-act analysis was pioneered by Erving Goffman, and it has been further developed and systematically articulated by Stephen C. Levinson.¹⁴ In Goffman's formulation of this model, the origin of a message is divided into the three "production roles" of animator (the one who actually enunciates the words), author (the one who composes the words), and principal ("the party to whose position, stand, and belief the words attest"). The destination of a message is divided into those who are "official" or "ratified participants" (either directly addressed or part of a ratified audience) and those who are not ("eavesdroppers," "overhearers," and "bystanders").¹⁵ Levinson greatly elaborates on this scheme, arriving at seventeen named roles.¹⁶ Those he calls "production roles" are distinguished from each other by the properties of physical presence (Levinson, "participation") in the communication event, delivery of the message signal (Levinson, "transmission"), the motive to communicate the message, and shaping of the message into the form in which it is delivered as a signal:

Author (+ participation, + transmission, + motive, + form)
 "Ghostee" (+ participation, + transmission, + motive, - form)
 Spokesman (+ participation, + transmission, - motive, + form)
 Relay (+ participation, + transmission, - motive, - form)
 Deviser (+ participation, - transmission, + motive, + form)
 Sponsor (+ participation, - transmission, + motive, - form)

¹⁴ Another pioneer in the development of this kind of analysis is Dell Hymes. In an article entitled "Models of the Interaction of Language and Social Life," in *Directions in Sociolinguistics: The Ethnography of Communication*, ed. John Gumperz and Dell Hymes (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972), 58-65, Hymes outlines sixteen "components of speech," among which are four components grouped under the heading of "participation": Speaker/sender, Addressor, Hearer/receiver/audience, and Addressee. This introduces a critical distinction between connectivity to the signal and explicit reference within the signal, a distinction which proved influential in the later development of models for participant roles by Goffman, Levinson, and Irvine. Further, Hymes's outline of the "components of speech," which include not only participants in a speech act but also elements relating to message form, content, context, and purpose, is useful in many ways and has influenced our model for gesture analysis, which is presented below.

¹⁵ Erving Goffman, *Forms of Talk* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981), 131-33, 226-27.

¹⁶ Levinson, "Putting Linguistics on a Proper Footing," 161-227. In addition to the seventeen listed here, Levinson names eight superordinate roles that are specified for only one or two features. The somewhat abbreviated presentation of Levinson's categories given here will suffice to show how this analysis would apply to descriptions of gestures in Northwest Semitic literature.

“Ghostor” (+ participation, - transmission, - motive, + form)
Ultimate Source (- participation, - transmission, + motive, + form)
Principal (- participation, - transmission, + motive, - form)
Formulator (- participation, - transmission, - motive, + form)

Similarly, the roles Levinson calls “reception roles” are distinguished by the properties of overt address (which can be accomplished by means of linguistic forms, gestures, gaze, or lack of other possible addressees), status as an intended recipient of the message, ratified participation in the communication act, and “channel-linkage” or “ability to receive the message”:

Interlocutor (+ address, + recipient, + participant, + channel-linkage)
Indirect Target (- address, + recipient, + participant, + channel-linkage)
Intermediary (+ address, - recipient, + participant, + channel-linkage)
Audience (- address, - recipient, + participant, + channel-linkage)
Overhearer (- address, - recipient, - participant, + channel-linkage)
Targetted Overhearer (- address, + recipient, - participant, + channel-linkage)
Ultimate Destination (- address, + recipient, - participant, - channel-linkage)

The distinction in this model between participant and non-participant reception roles resembles that of thematic-role analysis, at least superficially. The distinction between participant and non-participant roles in thematic-role analysis corresponds to the compatibility between a predicate and the arguments in a clause, while this one reflects the compatibility between a social construct of an interaction situation and the people involved in real-world instances of interaction.

Judith Irvine, in a follow-up to Levinson’s article, points out that the semiotic analysis of a communication event can extend infinitely backward and forward from the actual event.¹⁷ She argues that Levinson’s effort to include all of the roles implied in a communicative interaction in a single model obscures the complex ways in which prior and anticipated interactions are cited, created, and strategically deployed in an interaction event. Irvine suggests retaining a “simple set

¹⁷ Judith Irvine, “Shadow Conversations: The Indeterminacy of Participant Roles,” in *Natural Histories of Discourse*, ed. Michael Silverstein and Greg Urban (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 131-59.

of primary participant roles,” namely “Speaker, Addressee, and third parties present and absent,” so as to allow the analysis of a communication act to focus on “the process by which participation structures are constructed, imagined, and socially distributed.”¹⁸

Using Irvine’s model of communication-act analysis in the context of Exodus 8:2, one can describe the role of Aaron as “Gesturer” (my ad hoc term employed temporarily to correspond to Irvine’s concept of “Speaker”¹⁹), a complex role that can be unpacked when the chain of communication behind it is examined (in this case, as described by Exodus 8:1, Aaron acts as Relayer of the action of extending the hand, of which Yahweh is the Ultimate Source and Moses is the Intermediary). In addition, the waters of Egypt can be described succinctly as the “Addressee”²⁰ of the gesture act; this avoids the overly specific and not quite suitable categories of thematic-role analysis. The chief drawback of communication-act analysis as developed by Goffman, Levinson, and Irvine is that it has no roles for the body parts used in gesture acts (e.g. the hand in Exodus 8:2). (The focus in this form of analysis is on speech; one notes that the position and movement of the organs of speech are encoded in the verbal representation of speech itself and thus do not need to be overtly expressed in the description of a speech act.) In this one respect, thematic-role analysis and the “Communication Theory Model” of communication-act analysis are more useful.

In summary, several aspects of thematic-role analysis as well as of the various iterations of communication-act analysis are useful in describing Northwest Semitic gesture phrases and will be employed in our analysis below. However, there remain some semantic roles that are used to contrast gesture phrases in Northwest Semitic languages but that do not factor into any of these systems. The system employed here, therefore, is constructed by the present writer

¹⁸ Irvine, “Shadow Conversations,” 135-36.

¹⁹ The term “Agent,” introduced and explained below, is used for this semantic role hereafter.

²⁰ The term “Target,” introduced and explained below, is used hereafter.

specifically from and for the analysis of these gesture phrases, though this system uses some categories and terms borrowed from thematic-role analysis as well as from communication-act analysis. The system uses six main categories (Agent, Sender, Instrument, Receiver, Target, and Purpose), two of which (Target and Purpose) have subcategories. The main categories are used by default unless contrasts between actually attested phrases prompt the use of a subcategory. The terms and categories used in this system, which will be illustrated extensively throughout the remainder of this chapter, are here listed by their abbreviations:

Table 1. Semantic Roles in Northwest Semitic Gesture Phrases

Abbreviation	Role	Explanation
A	Agent	the one who physically performs the gesture, either as instigator or as representative of another
S	Sender	a body part belonging to the Agent and used in producing the gesture
I	Instrument	a material item, sometimes expressed as direct object of the verb or sometimes as object of a preposition, used as an instrument in performing the gesture
R	Receiver	a body part belonging to a human (or personified) Target and directly involved in the gesture
T	Target	the addressee of the gesture, the entity at which the gesture is aimed
T _{add}	Target/Addressee	Target that is physically addressed in the gesture act, often reacting or changing as a result of it (e.g. “I raised my hand to the children of Israel to lead them out of Egypt,” “I raise my hand against the water , and it dries up”)
T _{ref}	Target/Referenced	Target referenced as a third party and not physically present in the gesture act (e.g. in divine speech to a prophet, “I raise my hand concerning them : They shall bear their iniquity”)
T _{dir}	Target/Directional	Target toward which the gesture movement is physically directed but which is not intended as a recipient of the communication embodied in the gesture (e.g. in divine speech to people on earth, “I raise my hand to heaven ”)
(adv)T _{dir}	adverbial Directional Target	Directional Target which is unmarked by a preposition but which nevertheless functions adverbially in the clause (in Semitic languages that have overt case marking, this would be expressed by the accusative case)
P	Purpose	the event anticipated by the gesture, often described with the preposition <i>lā</i> plus an infinitive form of a verb
P _{obl}	Purpose/Obligation	what the person making the gesture is obligated to do as a result of it (e.g. “I raise my hand to lead you out of Egypt ”)
P _{exp}	Purpose/Expectation	what the person making the gesture expects to get as a result of it (e.g. “I raise my hand to be satisfied with bread ”)

Broadly speaking, gesture phrases attested in Northwest Semitic literature may be divided into four grammatical types. The first, and by far the most common, type is a clause consisting minimally of a verb of which the expressed or implied subject is the person performing the gesture (the Agent). Often, the body part used in performing the gesture (the Sender) is expressed as the direct object of the verb. Body parts occurring in these phrases and falling within the scope of the present study are the following:

arm:	Hebrew <i>zəro</i> ^{(w)a 21}
hand(s):	Hebrew <i>yəd</i> (<i>ayim</i>), Ugaritic <i>yd</i> (<i>m</i>), Aramaic <i>yad</i> (<i>ayn</i>) and <i>'yd</i> (<i>yn</i>), Phoenician <i>yd</i> ²²
palm(s):	Hebrew <i>kap</i> (<i>payim</i>) ²³
right hand:	Hebrew <i>yəmīn</i> , Ugaritic <i>ymn</i> , Aramaic <i>ymyn</i> ²⁴
left hand:	Hebrew <i>šəmo</i> <i>'l</i> ²⁵

In other instances, the Sender is left unexpressed. Some gesture verbs do not take an explicit direct object Sender, for example the contact gesture verbs *'ḥaz* and *heḥ^εzī^νq*, both meaning “grasp.”²⁶ Other verbs may, as an alternative to having a direct object Sender, have as their direct

²¹ The Ugaritic cognate *ḏr* ‘ is not used in attested gesture phrases. Likewise, the Aramaic *dərā* ‘ is not found in gesture phrases for the period covered by the present study. There is no attested Phoenician cognate for this word.

²² The dual form of Phoenician *yd* is not found used in gesture phrases. The unvocalized Aramaic form *'yd*(*yn*) is found in Papyrus Amherst 63. Besides denoting the hand itself, this word can have a broader semantic range, denoting, among other possibilities, the forearm or the arm (thereby overlapping semantically with *zəro*^{(w)a} ‘). Cf. P. R. Ackroyd, “*yād*,” in *TDOT*, 5:400; *HALOT*, 2:386-87; *DULAT*, 2:952-53. It is sometimes difficult to tell which precise sense is meant in gesture phrases. However, this is usually a moot point, since movement of the hand in a ritual gesture typically requires movement of the whole arm in the same direction, and vice versa.

²³ The Ugaritic and Aramaic cognates, *kp* and *kap* respectively, are not attested in use in gesture phrases. A Phoenician cognate is not attested in surviving sources. In addition to “palm,” *kap* can stand for the entire hand (thereby overlapping with the semantic range of *yəd*). Cf. Ackroyd in *TDOT*, 5:403-5; *HALOT*, 2:491-92. It is sometimes difficult to tell which sense is intended in gesture phrases. However, as with *yəd*, this is usually a moot point.

²⁴ A Phoenician cognate is not attested.

²⁵ The only gesture phrase in ancient Northwest Semitic literature in which the left hand is explicitly mentioned, as far as the present writer is aware, occurs in a Hebrew passage in Daniel 12:7.

²⁶ In general in Northwest Semitic languages as well as in English, verbs for contact gestures are similar to speech act verbs in that overt mention of the body parts that produce the gesture is dispensed with or, at most, optional. Cf. the verbs *nəga* ‘ “touch” and *ḥibbeq* “embrace.” This might have a real-world basis in that the visibility of the hands

object the Instrument used in performing the gesture (I). In some cases, the preposition *bə* “with” intervenes between the verb and the Instrument. Thus we find the following types with no explicit Sender:

- verb: *heh^εzi^yq* “grasp” (Isaiah 41:9)
 verb + I: *nətə^h matte^h* “extend the staff” (Exodus 8:12)
 verb + bəI: *nətə^h bəki^ydo^wn* (literally) “extend with the sword” (Joshua 8:18)²⁷

Of course, the Sender and the Instrument may both be explicit, as in *nətə^h yəd bəmatte^h* “extend the hand with the staff” (Exodus 8:1, 13). In addition to the Sender and/or the Instrument, this first type of gesture clause may include one or more adverbial phrases expressing the semantic roles of Receiver, Target, and/or Purpose.

The second type of gesture phrase is also a clause, but one in which the subject of the verb is not the Agent but the Sender. The Sender may be any of the body parts listed in the previous paragraph. Examples of this kind of clause are *tərom yədəkə ‘al-šəre^ykə* “May your hand be high against your adversaries” (Micah 5:8) and *bī^y təməkə^h yəmi^ynekə* “your right hand held me” (Psalm 63:9). From the point of view of semantics, what is distinctive about this phrase type is that the description focuses on the Sender and not, as in the first type, on the interaction between the Agent and the Target. From the point of view of grammar, this type differs from the first type in that the Sender is always overtly expressed, while there are some examples in which there is no expressed verb, the clause being of the “equational” type which, in Hebrew and other Semitic languages, does not require a verb.

in a contact gesture, like that of the organs of speech and unlike that of the hands in gestures among physically separated participants, is not crucial for interpreting the message.

²⁷ It is argued below that this type is elliptical, with an implied Sender; see discussion under the basic gesture phrases *heri^ym yəd* and *nətə^h yəd*.

There are two examples of gesture clauses in which the Sender is juxtaposed with a Qal passive participle functioning as a predicate adjective: *zəro* ^a*kə* *h^aśu^wpə^h* “your arm is bared” (Ezekiel 4:7) and *yədo^w nətu^wyə^h* “his hand is extended” (Isaiah 5:25; 9:10-11, 16, 19-20; 10:4). Although these examples belong to the second phrase type, it is clear from context that the phrases are semantically identical with the phrases *həsap zəro^a* ‘ and *nəṭə^h yəd* of the first type. These two examples with the Qal passive participle are therefore grouped with the first type in the body of this chapter.

The third type of phrase is not a clause but a noun phrase consisting of the Sender and an adjective describing that body part’s position or movement. There are four examples, all from the Hebrew Bible: *zəro^a ‘ nətu^wyə^h* “an extended arm” (Exodus 6:6; Deuteronomy 4:34; 5:15; 7:19; 9:29; 11:2; 1 Kings 8:42; 2 Kings 17:36; Jeremiah 27:5; 32:17; 32:21; Ezekiel 20:33-34 (2x); Psalm 136:10-12; 2 Chronicles 6:32); *yəd nətu^wyə^h* “an extended hand” (Isaiah 14:26-27; Jeremiah 21:5); *yəd rəmə^h* “a raised hand” (Exodus 14:8; Numbers 15:30; 33:3); and *yəd šəlu^whəh* “an outstretched hand” (Ezekiel 2:9). Again, it is easy to link *yəd nətu^wyə^h* and *yəd šəlu^whəh*, which use the Qal passive participle, with the phrases *nəṭə^h yəd* and *šəlah yəd* of the first phrase type. Similarly, *yəd rəmə^h* is clearly to be linked with the finite phrase *rəmə^h yəd*, which belongs to the second type. This type of phrase is thus closely related to the first and second types, the only difference being that an attributive adjective occurs in place of a finite verb or predicate adjective.²⁸ Because of this close relationship, examples of the third phrase type are grouped with the first and second types in the present study.

The fourth type of phrase consists of a verbal noun in construct with the Sender. Among the ritual gesture phrases considered in this study, there are only three examples of this type, all

²⁸ It is true that the very common phrase *zəro^a ‘ nətu^wyə^h* has no corresponding phrase with a finite verb. Yet for the purposes of classification, it is not difficult to reconstruct a corresponding phrase **nəṭə^h zəro^a* ‘.

of which come from the Hebrew Bible: *mo'al yodayim* “putting up of the hands” (Nehemiah 8:6), *mas'at kappayim* “lifting up of the palms” (Psalm 141:2), and *tenu^wpat yad* “elevating of the hand” (Isaiah 19:16).²⁹ As will be demonstrated below, two of these phrases can be derived from frequently attested finite verb phrases that occur in similar contexts: *mas'at kappayim* from *naso' kappayim* and *tenu^wpat yad* from *heni^p yad*. Both of these finite verb phrases happen to belong to the first type of gesture phrase described above. However, *mo'al yodayim* cannot be easily correlated with any other gesture phrase, and there remains ambiguity as to whether this phrase is more closely related to the first or the second phrase type, that is, whether the verbal noun *mo'al* is what the Agent does to the Sender (Sender as object) or what the Sender does by itself (Sender as subject).³⁰ Since this example shows that gesture phrases of the fourth type cannot always be derived in simple fashion from phrases of other grammatical types, the three examples of this type considered in this study are grouped separately from the first and second types.³¹

The following discussion is organized according to basic gesture phrases consisting minimally of a verb or, in the case of the fourth type, a verbal noun. The basic gesture phrase

²⁹ Cf. the phrases *mišlo^wh yad* (Isaiah 11:14) and *mišlah yad* (Deuteronomy 12:7, 18; 15:10; 23:21; 28:8, 20), both meaning “outstretching of the hand”; these are not included in the present study since they do not describe ritual gestures. Different phrases of this fourth type are used for ritual gestures in later Hebrew literature; cf. *ms' t yd* “lifting up of the hand” in 1QM 18:3 and *nšy' t kpyw* “lifting up of the palms” (referring to the performance of the Priestly Benediction) in Talmud Bavli, *Ta'anit* 26b (8x, all in Gemara).

³⁰ On the oft-encountered ambiguity between the functions of the “subjective” and “objective genitive” in bound constructions, see *IBHS*, §§9.4f, 9.5.1a-b, 9.5.2a-b. *mo'al*, a Mem-preformative noun from the root 'ly “to ascend,” appears to be from a ground form *mu'l, similar to the *qutl*-type noun *šoḥad* “bribe” < *šuhd. The *u* vowel following the preformative Mem is highly unusual (contrast the very common substantive-derived adverb and preposition *ma'al* “higher part,” BDB, 751-52); it could be related to the *u* vowel in the first syllable of some Semitic passive verb stems (such as the Hebrew Pual and Hophal), which would suggest that the Sender in this construction is the subject of the action denoted by *mo'al*. In this connection it is noteworthy that there exists from this same root 'ly a Hophal stem verb *ho^al^h*, meaning “be carried away, be taken up, be offered.” See BDB, 750.

³¹ The Biblical Hebrew phrases *mišlah yad* and *mišlo^wh yad*, both apparently related to *šolah yad* “stretch out the hand,” also demonstrate that phrases of the fourth type, at least in earlier Hebrew, cannot always be equated with phrases of other grammatical types. *mišlah yad* is used several times in Deuteronomy (see note above) in a context that is distinct from *mišlo^wh yad* as well as from the many contextual types attested for *šolah yad*. The morphological difference between *mišlah yad* and *mišlo^wh yad* also makes it impossible to draw a simple one-to-one correspondence with the morphologically invariant *šolah yad*. The situation is different in later Hebrew, in which some nominal patterns used in gesture phrases of the fourth type have come to function as verbal nouns (notably the *qati^vl^h* pattern, which becomes the verbal noun for the Qal stem verb). Cf. M. H. Segal, *A Grammar of Mishnaic Hebrew* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 98.

also includes the Sender, except in cases of the first phrase type where the verb does not take a direct object Sender. The first and second types are distinguished in the basic gesture phrase by whether the verb is in its default masculine singular form (first type) or is inflected for feminine gender to agree with the Sender (second type). (The hand and arm, like most other paired body parts, are feminine in Northwest Semitic languages.) As already explained, examples of the Sender juxtaposed with a Qal passive participle are grouped with the first phrase type, and examples of the third phrase type are also grouped with the first type, except in the case of *yꝓd rꝓmꝓ^h* “raised hand” in Exodus 14:8; Numbers 15:30; 33:3, which belongs to the second type.

Matters of interpretation, including previous commentary on gesture phrases and the passages in which they occur, are addressed here only when they impact the textual reading, translation, or contextual analysis of a passage or gesture phrase. This restriction is employed in order to help maintain a focus on presenting the data on gesture phrases and organizing it into categories by contextual type. Commentary relating to the visualization of the gestures described by these phrases will be discussed in chapter 4, where iconographic data are also presented and discussed. Commentary relating to the semiotic analysis of gestures, including their symbolic meaning, will be discussed in chapter 5.

2.2. Gesture Phrases

2.2.1. *ʿḥaz* “Grasp”

The verb *ʿḥaz* “grasp” is used twice in gesture phrases of the first grammatical type. Of these, the later occurrence (Psalm 73:23) is in a religious context that could be interpreted as an

allusion to ritual, while the earlier occurrence (in the Ugaritic narrative poem of Aqhatu, *KTU* 1.17 i 30) refers to non-ritual social interaction.

In Psalm 73:23-24, the verb *'ḥaz* is used of Yahweh grasping the right hand of a human Target. The full gesture phrase is *'ḥaz bəR T* “grasp the R of T,” where the Receiver is *yad-yomi'n* “right hand.”

Psalm 73:23-24 (23) wa^ani^y tōmi^yd 'immōk **'ḥaztō bəyad-yōmi^yni^y** (24) ba^aṣōtākō tanḥeni^y wə'aḥar kōbo^wd tiqqōḥeni^y
 (23) I am with you always; **you have grasped my right hand.** (24) You conduct me into your council and will afterwards receive me to glory.

The descriptive setting in this passage is a poetic reference to religious interactions between Yahweh and his worshiper. While many interpreters regard this as a figurative allusion to God aiding the Psalmist or granting him eternal life, the contextual link to some uses of *həḥ^zi^yq* “grasp” (see below) would suggest a possible allusion to a ritual in which the Psalmist is either led or received by the hand.³² This will be discussed further in chapters 4 and 5. Another indicator of the contextual type here is the parallelism. The verb *'ḥaz* has a close semantic parallel in the next bicolon, *lōqah* “take, receive.”³³ The four parallel cola in these verses express variations on the theme of closeness to the divine: being with, grasping, leading, receiving. An

³² Mitchell Dahood, *The Anchor Bible: Psalms II (51-100)* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1974), 194-95; John H. Eaton, *Kingship and the Psalms* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1986), 77, 142-44; idem, *The Psalms: A Historical and Spiritual Commentary with an Introduction and New Translation* (London: T&T Clark International, 2003), 267; Othmar Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World: Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Book of Psalms* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1997), 198-201, 258-59. Matthew B. Brown, “The Handclasp, the Temple, and the King” (unpublished paper, August 2008), citing Dahood and others, suggests that Psalm 73:23-24 alludes to a ritual induction of the king into the Holy of Holies in the temple, in which ritual God, via a human proxy, receives the king with a handclasp. Brown points to the rite of anointing the king as another example of God performing a gesture through a human proxy (cf. Psalm 89:21-22; 1 Samuel 16:1; 1 Kings 1:39); one could also compare the gesture of destruction or exertion of supernatural power (see below under *nōṭ^h yōd*), which can be performed by humans but is directed by God and attributed to him. Thanks are due to Mr. Brown for sharing his unpublished paper with the present writer.

³³ The verb *'ḥaz*, beside the concrete sense of “grasp,” has a range of uses in which the sense is closer to that of “take.” See BDB, 28. The Arabic cognate, *'ahāḍa*, has primarily the sense of “take” and secondarily that of “grab” (Wehr, 8).

additional mark of the contextual type is that in the gesture phrase itself, the grammatical relationship between the verb and the Receiver is mediated by the preposition *bə*. Finally, it is noteworthy that the Agent of the gesture phrase is Yahweh, who performs the gesture toward a human Target (the Psalmist).

The verb *ʿḥaz* is used once in an Ugaritic passage describing grasping the hand of a drunken parent to lead him. The full gesture phrase is *aḥd R T* “grasp the R of T,” where the Receiver is *yd* “hand.”

Aqhatu, *KTU* 1.17 i 30-31 (30) **ʿaḥd . ydh** . bškṛn . mʿmsh (31) [k]šbʿ yn

(30) **grasping his hand** in (his) drunkenness, supporting him (31) when he is sated with wine

The contextual type here is different from that of Psalm 73:23-24. The descriptive setting does not involve a religious interaction with God, but rather a mundane interaction between a son and his human father. The parallelism is also different, with the gesture phrase being parallel to *mʿmsh* “supporting him” rather than to verbs expressing closeness and guidance. In the gesture phrase itself, the Receiver is the direct object of the verb, unlike in Psalm 73:23, where the grammatical relationship between the verb and the Receiver is mediated by the preposition *bə*. Finally, the Agent of the gesture phrase is not a deity but a human, and further, one who is subordinate to the Target. Examples of grasping of the hand in this contextual type are also found in Hebrew, but with the verb *ḥeḥēzīq* (q.v.).

2.2.2. 'օհ^hօօ^h Կօմիⁿ “Of the Right Hand, Grasp”

The phrase 'օհ^hօօ^h Կօմիⁿ T “of the right hand, grasp T,” which belongs to the second grammatical type of gesture phrase, is used of a gesture performed by Yahweh to his faithful as he receives them to glory.

Psalm 139:9-10 (9) 'εśśօ' kanpe^y-šօḥar 'εškəno^h bə' aḥ^ari^yt Կօմ (10) gam-šօm Կօձեօ
tanḥeni^y wəto' ḥ^azeni^y Կօմիⁿեօ

(9) I will ascend with the wings of dawn, I will dwell at the distant horizon of the sea. (10) Even there your hand will conduct me, **your right hand will grasp me.**

The descriptive setting is poetic in form and religious in subject matter. The gesture is parallel to *նօհօ^h* “lead, conduct,” and the Agent of the gesture is Yahweh. In all these respects, the contextual type is similar to that of 'օհօօ^h bəR T “grasp the R of T” in Psalm 73:23, cited above.

2.2.3. *heḥ^εzi^yq* “Grasp”

The verb *heḥ^εzi^yq* “grasp” is used in several Hebrew expressions describing Yahweh grasping the hand of his chosen. The contextual type in which these phrases occur has to do with forming a covenant relationship; oath obligations are involved, and the Target enters into a privileged relationship with the deity. The form of the gesture phrase varies, at least in its surface structure. It can take the simple form *heḥ^εzi^yq T* “grasp T” (Isaiah 41:9), or there may be explicit mention of the Receiver, either as direct object of the verb (*heḥ^εzi^yq R* “grasp R,” Isaiah 41:13) or following the preposition *bə* (*heḥ^εzi^yq bəR* “grasp R,” Isaiah 42:6; 45:1; Jeremiah 31:32; Job 8:20). When the Receiver is mentioned, the word used may be *Կօմիⁿ* “right hand” (Isaiah 41:13; 45:1) or *Կօձ* “hand” (Isaiah 42:6; Jeremiah 31:32; Job 8:20). In two cases, there is a Purpose constituent, introduced by the preposition *lə*, that describes an obligation taken on by the Agent

of the gesture (Isaiah 45:1; Jeremiah 31:32).³⁴ These variations in the gesture phrase can be summed up by designating the full gesture phrase as *heḥ^εzi^yq (bə)R T ləP* “grasp the R of T to P,” where the Receiver and Purpose constituents may be left unexpressed (as in Isaiah 41:9).

- Isaiah 41:9 ... ^{ʼa}šer **heḥ^εzaqti^yko** miqšo^wt ho^ʼərəš u^wme^{ʼa}ši^yle^yho qəro^ʼti^yko wə^ʼomar ləko ^ʼabdi^y-^ʼatto^h bəḥarti^yko wəlo^ʼ mə^ʼasti^yko
- ...you whom **I have grasped** from the ends of the earth and have called from its corners, and to whom I have said, “You are my servant. I have chosen you and have not rejected you.”
- Isaiah 41:13 ki^y ^{ʼa}ni^y YHWH ^{ʼε}lohē^yko **maḥ^azi^yq yəmi^yneko** ho^ʼomer ləko ^ʼal-ti^yro^ʼ ^{ʼa}ni^y ^{ʼa}zarti^yko
- For I am Yahweh your God, **he who grasps your right hand**, who says to you, “Do not fear, I will help you.”
- Isaiah 42:6 ^{ʼa}ni^y YHWH qəro^ʼti^yko bəšədeq wə^ʼ **aḥzeq bəyōdəko** wə^ʼəššərakə wə^ʼəttənko libri^t ^ʼom lə^ʼo^wr go^wyim
- I am Yahweh. I have called you in righteousness, **I have grasped³⁵ your hand**, watched over you, and made you a covenant of the people, a light to the nations.
- Isaiah 45:1 ko^h-^ʼomar YHWH limši^yho^w ləko^wreš ^{ʼa}šer-**heḥ^εzaqti^y bi^ymi^yno^w lərad-ləpəno^yw go^wyim** u^wmətnē^y mələki^ym ^{ʼa}patte^aḥ **lipto^aḥ ləpəno^yw dələtayim** u^wšə^ʼəri^ym lo^ʼ yissəgeru^w
- Thus says Yahweh to his anointed one, to Cyrus, whose **right hand I have grasped to subdue nations before him**, ungirding kings, **and to open the doors before him**, the gates not being closed.
- Jeremiah 31:31-32 (31) hinne^h yəmi^ym bə^ʼi^ym nə^ʼum-YHWH wəkərat^y ^ʼet-be^yt yišro^ʼel wə^ʼet-be^yt yəhu^wdə^h bəri^yt ḥ^adəšə^h (32) lo^ʼ kabbəri^yt ^{ʼa}šer kərat^y ^ʼet-^{ʼa}bo^wtəm bəyo^wm **heḥ^εzi^yqi^y bəyōdəm ləho^wši^yʼəm me^ʼereš mišrəyim** ^{ʼa}šer-hemmo^h heperu^w ^ʼet-bəri^yti^y wə^ʼəno^{ki}y bə^ʼalti^y bəm nə^ʼum-YHWH

³⁴ The subcategory Purpose/Obligation (P_{obl}) is not used here, since it is not needed to distinguish the phrase from others using the verb *heḥ^εzi^yq* and having a Purpose clause.

³⁵ Although the Septuagint, KJV, and NIV interpret the verb *wə^ʼaḥzeq* as referring to a future action, the form is rather an archaic preterite and is rendered thus in some ancient translations (Syriac, Targum, and Vulgate) and also in (N)RSV and NJB. D. Winton Thomas suggests vocalizing the Waw at the beginning of the word with a Qamets instead of a Patakh, making the form a Waw consecutive imperfect, though this suggestion lacks direct textual support; see *BHS*, 739.

(31) Behold, days are coming, says Yahweh, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, (32) not like the covenant that I made with their ancestors in the day that **I grasped their hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt**, which covenant of mine they broke, though I had become their husband,³⁶ says Yahweh.

Job 8:20 hən-’el lo’ yim’as-təm wəlo’-yah^azi^vq bəyad-məre’i’əm

Behold, God will not reject a person of integrity, nor **will he grasp the hands³⁷ of evildoers**.

The first four passages listed above may be grouped together on the grounds of descriptive context, for two of them occur in the same pericope (Isaiah 41:9, 13), and all four occur within three chapters of Deutero-Isaiah that are closely linked thematically. The formal, ritual nature of the gesture in these passages and the connection to making a covenant have been recognized by interpreters.³⁸

For Jeremiah 31:31-32, both the grouping together with the Deutero-Isaiah passages and the analysis as a covenant-making gesture run contrary to most previous interpretations. Though there is an explicit reference to a covenant (*bəri’yt*) in this passage, the connection between the

³⁶ The parallel usage in Jeremiah 3:14 shows that the sense can be broader than that of establishing a husband-wife relationship (there the relationship seems to be one of father-children). As some have noted, however, the translation “become their husband” fits both with usage of the verb *bə’al* elsewhere and with the common prophetic motif of Yahweh being a husband to faithless Israel. In any case, the relationship established in Jeremiah 3:14 and 31:32 is familial and not the exclusively distant, political relationship implied by the English translation “become lord over,” which some others use to render the phrase here. Cf. BDB, 127; J. A. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 581; Gerald L. Keown, Pamela J. Scalise, and Thomas G. Smothers, *Word Biblical Commentary, Volume 27: Jeremiah 26-52* (Dallas: Word Books, 1995), 132. Contrary to Thompson (*ibid.*), there is no conflict between the covenant context and the forming of a marriage relationship; cf. Ezekiel 16:8. Some, based on the reading of the Septuagint here, emend this verb to *gə’alti’* “I abhorred.” However, the reading of the Masoretic text, which is supported by other textual witnesses, works well if the conjunction *wə* is taken in an adversative sense and if the real-world time that the verb refers to is understood as pluperfect. Cf. Robert P. Carroll, *Jeremiah: A Commentary* (London: SCM Press, 1986), 610; Keown, Scalise, and Smothers, *Jeremiah 26-52*, 126; William McKane, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Jeremiah* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 819-20.

³⁷ *yad* “hand” is singular here, but it is common in Hebrew for inalienable attributes (such as body parts) to have a distributive sense when singular and bound to a following plural noun or pronoun, as “one X of each of Y.”

³⁸ Zeev W. Falk, “Gestures Expressing Affirmation,” *JSS* 4/3 (1959): 268-69; Joseph Blenkinsopp, *The Anchor Bible: Isaiah 40-55* (New York: Doubleday, 2002), 199-200, 211, 249. Blenkinsopp describes the motif of the deity grasping the ruler’s hand as “part of official court language in the ancient Near East” (*ibid.*, 211) and as part of the “Babylonian *Hofstil*, the protocol and ceremonial of the Babylonian court” (*ibid.*, 249). As a specific example of this, Blenkinsopp refers to the Cyrus cylinder, in which Marduk is said to take the hand of Cyrus (*ibid.*, 249). Cf. also Keel, *Symbolism of the Biblical World*, 258; Shalom M. Paul, “Deutero-Isaiah and Cuneiform Royal Inscriptions,” *JAOS* 88 (1968): 182n19.

gesture and the covenant is not explicit, except that both are said to have taken place in the same “day” (*bəyo^wm...*). Most interpreters take the gesture phrase as a reference to the exodus, in which Yahweh supposedly took Israel by the hand to lead them (similar to the use of the phrase to describe leading an incapacitated elder by the hand, for which see below).³⁹

Two general indicators that the gesture in Jeremiah 31:31-32 has to do with making a covenant or taking an oath may be cited. First, other examples of this gesture phrase refer to Yahweh making a covenant, while none refer to Yahweh leading people by the hand. For instance, the example in Isaiah 42:6, which happens to be closely parallel to that in Jeremiah 31:32 in terms of phraseology (with *bəyad T*), definitely refers to entering into a covenant relationship. In that passage, Yahweh grasps the hand of his servant and makes him “a covenant of the people” (*libri^yt ‘om*), thereby entering indirectly into a covenant relationship with his people. Similarly, Jeremiah 31:32 may refer to a covenant made indirectly with Israel through Moses, as narrated in Exodus 3:10-12.⁴⁰ In Isaiah 45:1, we have the only other example of a Purpose constituent with the preposition *lə* plus an infinitive construct verb following *heh^εzi^yq bəR*. In that instance, the Purpose constituent clearly expresses an oath obligation undertaken by Yahweh, namely to subdue nations and open doors before the Target; it does not express an action performed on the Target through the instrumentality of holding the hand, such as is

³⁹ BDB, 305; L. Elliott Binns, *The Book of the Prophet Jeremiah* (London: Methuen and Co., 1919), 239; A. van Selms, *Jeremia* (Nijkerk: Uitgeverij G. F. Callenbach, 1974), 2:80, 2:225n59; Jack R. Lundbom, *The Anchor Bible: Jeremiah 21-36* (New York: Doubleday, 2004), 467. Van Selms denies an earlier suggestion by Weiser that there is “cultic coloring” in this passage, though the “cultic coloring” Weiser sees has to do with leading by the hand in a cultic procession and not grasping by the hand to make a covenant. The prevailing interpretation of this passage is very similar to that advanced by Johan Lust for the gesture phrase *nəśō ‘yod* “lift up the hand” (see below). Oddly, while Lust’s interpretation has been refuted by several scholars, the corresponding interpretation regarding grasping the hand in Jeremiah 31:32 has remained virtually unquestioned.

⁴⁰ David Calabro, “He Teaches My Hands to War’: The Semiotics of Ritual Hand Gestures in Ancient Israelite Warfare,” in *War and Peace in Jewish Tradition: From the Biblical World to the Present*, ed. Yigal Levin and Amnon Shapira (London: Routledge, 2012), 51-61. Most commentators take the covenant mentioned in Jeremiah 31:32 as the one made with Israel on Mount Sinai (Exodus 19-20); this interpretation and the assumption that the grasping of the hand is a figurative reference to the exodus are mutually dependent. See, for example, Thompson, *Book of Jeremiah*, 580-81.

usually assumed for Jeremiah 31:32. As already mentioned, no other examples of this gesture phrase refer to Yahweh leading people by the hand, including in the exodus from Egypt.⁴¹

Second, the context in which the phrase occurs in Jeremiah 31:32 compares well with occurrences of the oath gesture of lifting up the hand. This may be demonstrated by comparing the phraseology in Jeremiah 31:32 with that in Ezekiel 20:6, where a gesture phrase of raising the hand occurs:

Jeremiah 31:32

bəyo^wm
həḥ^εzi^yqi^y bəyōdōm
 ləho^wʃi^yʿōm
 meʿereṣ miṣrōyim
 in the day that
I grasped their hand
 to bring them out
 of the land of Egypt

Ezekiel 20:6

bayyo^wm hahu^wʾ
nośōʾ ti^y yōdi^y ləhem
 ləho^wʃi^yʿōm
 meʿereṣ miṣrōyim
 in that day
I lifted up my hand to them
 to bring them out
 of the land of Egypt

The phraseology in these two verses matches almost perfectly. Both begin with a reference to a certain “day” when a covenant was made (*bayyo^wm hahu^wʾ* in Ezekiel 20:6 resumes the word *bəyo^wm* in the previous verse, which is the same word used in Jeremiah 31:32); the covenant involves an oath on Yahweh’s part to bring Israel out of Egypt (*ləho^wʃi^yʿōm meʿereṣ miṣrōyim*).

⁴¹ Some commentators compare the following: Deuteronomy 1:31; Hosea 11:3; and Isaiah 40:11. See Binns, *The Book of the Prophet Jeremiah*, 239; Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21-36*, 467. In Deuteronomy 1:31, God is said to have carried (*nośōʾ*) Israel, but the reference is to the forty years of wandering in the wilderness, not the exodus. Hosea 11:3 describes Yahweh figuratively teaching Ephraim to walk, taking (*lōqah*) him by the arms (or, according to the Septuagint and the Vulgate, taking Ephraim in his—Yahweh’s—arms). Isaiah 40:11 is a prophecy that Yahweh will gather (*qibbes*), carry (*nośōʾ*), and lead (*nehel*) Israel as a shepherd does with his flock. The phraseology, the imagery, and the historical referents in these passages are therefore quite different from Jeremiah 31:32. Lundbom (*ibid.*) also cites Isaiah 41:13 and 42:6, which refer to Yahweh grasping the hand of his servant, but there is no evidence that these have to do with leading by the hand. On the contrary, a ritual grasping by the hand to enter into a covenant is well supported in these instances by context and by comparison with nearby passages (see above). We may also mention Genesis 19:16, which clearly describes angels grasping the hands (*həḥ^εzi^yq bəyad T*) of Lot and his family to lead them out (*wayyoṣiʾuhu^w*) of the city. This would be the best parallel for the prevailing interpretation of Jeremiah 31:32. Even so, the other parallels adduced here are more informative concerning the contextual analysis of Jeremiah 31:32, since they provide closer matches in phraseology and in the participants of the gesture (Yahweh and Israel).

The only substantive difference between these verses is the gesture phrase: grasping the Target’s hand in Jeremiah 31:32 versus lifting up the hand toward the Target in Ezekiel 20:6. This argues that the two gestures, while obviously different in terms of form, have the same purpose, namely that of taking an oath. That the purpose of both gestures is in fact that of oath-taking is suggested by other passages that mention Yahweh having sworn to bring Israel out of the land of Egypt (cf. Exodus 13:11; Deuteronomy 7:8; Judges 2:1, and see further below under *נָסַח* ’ *yṗd*). In view of these considerations, therefore, it is most likely that the context of the gesture phrase in Jeremiah 31:31-32 is properly that of oath-taking or entering into a covenant and not that of leading Israel by the hand.

In Job 8:20, Job’s peer Bildad asserts that God will not grasp the hands of evildoers, but he will not reject a person of integrity (*tṗm*, literally a person who is “perfect” or “complete”). The two cola in this verse present Yahweh’s reactions to opposite types of people, but both reactions are framed in the negative; the implication seems to be that Yahweh will grasp the hand of the person of integrity and reject the evildoers.⁴² The collocation of “grasping the hand” and “not rejecting” compares well with Isaiah 41:9 (*hēḥ^ᶜzaqtī^ᶜ’kṗ...wṗ ’omar ləkṗ...bəḥartī^ᶜ’kṗ wəlo ’ mə ’astī^ᶜ’kṗ* “I have grasped you...and said to you...I have chosen you and have not rejected you”).

The full gesture phrase *hēḥ^ᶜzī^ᶜ’q bəR T* “grasp the R of T,” where the Receiver is *yṗd* “hand,” is used to describe a boy-servant or son leading an elder who is incapacitated through blindness or drunkenness.

Judges 16:26 wayyo ’mēr šimšo^wn ’el-hanna ’ar **hammah^azi^vq bəyṗdo^w** hannī^yḥṗ^h ’o^wti^y
wah^{ay}mišeni^y ’et-hṗ ’ammudi^ym ’ašer habbayit nṗko^wn ’ale^yḥem wṗ ’eššṗ ’en
’ale^yḥem

Samson said to the boy **who grasped his hand**, “Allow me to touch the pillars on which the building rests, that I may lean on them.”

⁴² Cf. F. Hesse, “*chāzaq*,” in *TDOT*, 4:306.

Isaiah 51:18 'e^yn-mənahel ləh mikkəl-bəni^ym yələdə^h wə'e^yn **maḥ^azi^yq bəyədəh** mikkəl-bəni^ym giddele^h
 There is no guide for her of all the sons she has born; there is none **who grasps her hand** of all the sons she has raised.

In the first passage, Samson is in need of somebody to lead him since he is blind (Judges 16:21). In the Isaiah passage, the previous verse (Isaiah 51:17) states that Jerusalem, personified as a woman, has drunk the “cup of staggering.” In both passages, a young(er) male is the one who grasps (or would be expected to grasp) the hand of the incapacitated person.⁴³

This phrase is like some of the examples of grasping the hand to make a covenant in that the grammatical relationship between the verb and the Receiver is mediated by the preposition *bə*. However, other aspects of the contextual type are dramatically different. Rather than involving the forming of a covenant relationship between God and his chosen, these passages have to do with fulfilling a duty toward an elder, and there is no hint of a formal ritual. The Agent in both examples is a human who is in some way subordinate to the Target, whereas in the other contextual type, the Agent is always Yahweh.

In another idiom, the verb *heḥ^εzi^yq* is used of a person grasping the hand of another, but without any apparent connection to making a covenant or helping an incapacitated elder and without the preposition *bə* introducing the Receiver. In at least one passage (Ezekiel 16:49), the gesture has to do with helping the poor. The full gesture phrase in the two passages is *heḥ^εzi^yq yad T* “grasp the hand of T.”

Ezekiel 16:49 hinne^h-ze^h ḥəyō^h 'awon sədom 'əḥo^wtek gō'ō^wn šib'at-ləḥem wəšalwat hašqet ḥəyō^h lə^h wəlibno^wtə^yḥə **wəyad- 'əni^y wə'əbyo^wn lo' heḥ^εzi^yqə^h**

⁴³ In the case of Isaiah 51:18, the hypothetical Agent is not very young, since he has already been “raised.” Nevertheless, as a son of the Target, he would, of course, be younger than she.

Behold, this was the sin of Sodom your sister. She and her daughters had splendor, satiety of appetite, and tranquil prosperity, **but she did not grasp the hand of the poor and the needy.**

Zechariah 14:13 wəhəyɔ^h bayyo^wm hahu^w tihyɛ^h məhu^wmat-YHWH rabbo^h bəhem
wəhɛh^ɛzi^yqu^w 'i^yš **yad re^ʿehu^w** wə^ʿələtɔ^h yɔdo^w 'al-yad re^ʿehu^w

It will happen in that day (that) a great tumult from Yahweh will come upon them. Each man **will grasp the hand of his peer**, and/but his hand will be raised over the hand of his peer.

The idea of grasping the hand of the poor, which is definitely present in Ezekiel 16:49, is not readily apparent in Zechariah 14:13. The context in that passage describes upheaval that results from Yahweh's wrath against enemies who are fighting against Jerusalem. Commentators have tended to interpret the gesture here as a violent one, in line with the assumed violent meaning of the hand being high and other elements of the context.⁴⁴ However, this view is rendered problematic by the explicit mention of the target's hand as the Receiver of the gesture.⁴⁵ Among the other contextual types in which grasping the Target's hand occurs, none describes a violent purpose or result associated with the gesture. It is possible to interpret the gesture here as one of giving help, provided that the transition to the next clause, which describes one's hand being raised over that of his peer (apparently in a violent sense), is interpreted as adversative. The idea of offering a gesture of help in juxtaposition with a violent gesture would harmonize with the general picture of upheaval that this passage describes.⁴⁶ This, however, is inconclusive.

Some similarities between contextual types with the verb *hɛh^ɛzi^yq* and those with the verb *'ɔhaz* may be noted. Both verbs may be used in a contextual type in which Yahweh grasps the

⁴⁴ For two of the more emphatic and explicitly argued examples, see Charles Henry Hamilton Wright, *Zechariah and His Prophecies* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1879), 500; Carol L. Meyers and Eric M. Meyers, *The Anchor Bible: Zechariah 9-14* (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 456-57.

⁴⁵ David L. Peterson, *Zechariah 9-14 and Malachi: A Commentary* (London: SCM Press, 1995), 137, goes so far as to "omit *yad* in the first colon as a dittographic expansion based on *yad* in the second colon," thereby justifying his translation "each one will attack his comrade" (ibid., 134). We reject this solution on account of its purely conjectural nature. Nevertheless, it shows uneasiness with the violent interpretation of grasping the hand.

⁴⁶ This agrees generally with the assessment of Ackroyd in *TDOT*, 5:414.

hand of his chosen human servant, and both may be used to describe grasping the hand of a parent or elder who is drunk or otherwise incapacitated. It is interesting to observe that the phrases using *ʿḥaz* in Hebrew occur only in the Psalms, while those using *heḥʿziʿq* occur only in the Prophets. This may indicate a difference in register or archaicity between gesture phrases using *ʿḥaz* and those using *heḥʿziʿq* in Hebrew. The relationship between gesture phrases using these verbs will be discussed further in chapter 3.

2.2.4. *hiṭṭəʰ yəd* “Extend the Hand”

The idiom *hiṭṭəʰ yəd* “extend the hand” denotes a violent gesture, always with Yahweh as the Agent.

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| Isaiah 31:3 | <p>u^wmiṣrayim ʿōdōm wəloʿ - ʿel wəsu^wse^yhem bōśōr wəloʿ -ru^{wa}ḥ waYHWH
 yattəʰ yədo^w wəkōšal ʿo^wzer wənōpal ʿōzur wəyaḥdōw kullōm yiklōyu^wn</p> <p>Egypt is human and not divine, and its horses are flesh and not spirit. Yahweh will extend his hand, and the helper will stumble, the helped one will fall. All of them will be annihilated together.</p> |
| Jeremiah 6:12 | <p>wənōsabbu^w bōtte^yhem laʿ^aḥeri^ym śōdo^wt wənōši^ym yaḥdōw ki^y-ʿattəʰ ʿet-
 yōdi^y ʿal-yōšəbe^y ḥōʿrēš nəʿum-YHWH</p> <p>Their houses will be turned over to others, along with (their) fields and (their) women, for I will extend my hand against the inhabitants of the land, says Yahweh.</p> |
| Jeremiah 15:6 | <p>ʿatt nōṭāšt ʿoti^y nəʿum-YHWH ʿōḥo^wr teleki^y wəʿaṭ ʿet-yōdi^y ʿōlayik
 wəʿašḥi^ytek nilʿe^yti^y hinnoḥem</p> <p>You have forsaken me, says Yahweh, you have gone back. I extended my hand against you and destroyed you; I have wearied of being compassionate.</p> |

This is the first (in alphabetical order, though certainly not in frequency) of a number of idioms for a gesture of stretching out the hand to destroy an enemy or exert supernatural power. The use of the Hiphil stem of the root *nty* in the above three passages stands alongside the much more

frequent use of the Qal stem, which appears in very similar contexts and appears to have exactly the same meaning (see below under *nəṭṭāḥ yād*).

2.2.5. *heniṣp yād* “Elevate the Hand”

The Hebrew verb *heniṣp*, traditionally rendered as “wave” or the like, has been shown by Jacob Milgrom to mean “elevate.”⁴⁷ Phrases using this verb with the direct object *yād* “hand” can be divided by context into four types. The most frequent usage (attested in three passages) is in the context of destruction or exertion of supernatural power. In these cases, the full gesture phrase is *heniṣp yād ‘al-T_{add}* “elevate the hand against T_{add}.”

Isaiah 11:15	<p>wəhəḥ^ri^ym YHWH ’et ləšo^wn yəm-miṣrayim wəheniṣp yādo^w ’al-hannōḥər ba’yəm ru^wḥo^w wəhikkōhu^w ləšib’ō^h nəḥōli^ym wəhidri^yk bannō’ōli^ym</p> <p>Yahweh will annihilate the tongue of the Egyptian sea; he will elevate his hand against the river with the heat of his breath; he will smite it in the seven streams; he will let people tread (there) with sandals.</p>
Isaiah 19:16	<p>bayyo^wm hahu^w’ yihye^h miṣrayim kannōši^ym wəḥōrad u^wpōḥad mippōne^y tēnu^wpat yad-YHWH šəbō’ō^wt ’āšer-hu^w’ meniṣp ’ōlō^w</p> <p>In that day Egypt will be like women. It will tremble and fear before the elevating of Yahweh Sabaoth’s hand that he elevates against it.</p>
Zechariah 2:13	<p>ki^y hinəni^y meniṣp ’et-yōdi^y ’ale^yḥem wəḥoyu^w šōlōl lə’abde^yḥem wi^yda’təm ki^y-YHWH šəbō’ō^wt šəlōḥni^y</p> <p>Behold, I elevate my hand against them, and they will be spoil to their servants. Then you will know that Yahweh Sabaoth has sent me.</p>

⁴⁷ Jacob Milgrom, “The Alleged Wave-Offering in Israel and in the Ancient Near East,” *IEJ* 22 (1972): 33-38. As Milgrom shows, a translation as “raise, lift, elevate” fits best for this verb both from an etymological standpoint and in terms of context; in his argument, he makes reference to the parallelism in some of the passages discussed here. Cf. the concurring observations of Ackroyd, in *TDOT*, 5:415. Modern translators after Milgrom’s study have been inconsistent in applying its results. NIV (1984) and NRSV (1989) translate *heniṣp yād* as “raise the hand” in most passages discussed here, but they retain the translation “wave the hand” (or similar) in 2 Kings 5:11 and in the Isaiah passages discussed here. NJB (1985) is most consistent among major modern translations in employing the translation “raise” for this verb, but even NJB retains “wave” in 2 Kings 5:11. Joseph Blenkinsopp, *The Anchor Bible: Isaiah 1-39* (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 266, 274, 316, translates as “wave his hand” in Isaiah 11:15 and “wave your hand” in Isaiah 13:2, but he renders the same idiom in Isaiah 19:16 as “raises his hand.” Blenkinsopp may be unaware of Milgrom’s study, as he does not cite it in his bibliography. It is not necessary to translate the phrase *heniṣp yād* inconsistently, as the translation “elevate the hand” works perfectly well in all instances.

Among the contextual cues that help to categorize this phrase are result clauses including *wəhəyɔʰ T šəɔɔl* “T will be spoil” and *wəhikkəʰ A T* “A will smite T,” a Target/Addressee phrase introduced by the preposition ‘*al*, and the fact that the Agent is always Yahweh.⁴⁸

The preposition ‘*al*, which is usually translated “upon” or “over” when it is used in a spatial sense, is rendered “against” in this phrase. The reasons for this choice are based in large part on other phrases that are contextually parallel to this one and are discussed below. However, it may be observed that it makes slightly better sense to elevate the hand “against” Egypt (Isaiah 19:16) than “over” Egypt.⁴⁹

A gesture phrase using the verb *heniʰp* is also found in a legal context, with a referent of implied speech following the preposition ‘*al*. The full phrase is *heniʰp yɔd ‘al-T_{ref}* “elevate the hand concerning T_{ref}.”

Job 31:21-22 (21) ʾim **h^aniʰpoʰtiʰ ‘al-yətoʰm yədiʰ** kiʰ ʾerʰ εʰ baššaʰ ar ʾezrətiʰ (22) kətepiʰ miššikməʰ tippoʰl wəʰezroʰ iʰ miqqənoʰ tiššəber

(21) If **I have elevated my hand against an orphan** when I would see my “help” at the gate, (22) let my shoulder blade fall from the shoulder, let my arm be broken from its socket!

The context here seems to refer to legal action concerning an orphan (one without a living father and thus at a disadvantage in society).⁵⁰ The “gate” (*šaʰ ar*) is the place of legal activities (cf.

⁴⁸ A parallel may be found in the Hebrew text of Ben Sira, 36:3, where there is a plea to Yahweh to *hnyp yd ʾl m nkr wyr ʾw ʾt gbwryk* “**elevate the hand against the foreign people**, that they may see your might.”

⁴⁹ Generally, among major Bible translations such as NIV, NRSV, and NJB, the preposition ‘*al* is translated as “upon” or “over” when the verb *heniʰp* is translated as “wave,” but as “against” when the verb is translated as “raise.” With specific reference to the translation “against” in Isaiah 19:16, see Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 316-17, especially 317, note b. Though Blenkinsopp seems to recognize the propriety of this translation (vs. “over”) here, he does not extend this to other Isaiah passages where the same preposition is used in the same idiom in very similar contexts.

⁵⁰ Morris Jastrow, *The Book of Job: Its Origin, Growth, and Interpretation* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1920), 306-7; Paul Dhorme, *Le livre de Job* (Paris: Victor Lecoffre, 1926), 418; Robert Gordis, *The Book of Job: Commentary, New Translation, and Special Studies* (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1978), 349; John C. L. Gibson, *Job* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1985), 216-17; Norman C. Habel, *The*

Amos 5:12; Job 5:4), and Job himself is said in another nearby passage to have frequented that place and to have had position there (Job 29:7). Job’s “help” (‘*ezrōʰ*’) most probably means his supporters in legal proceedings.⁵¹ The gesture phrase seems to represent a formal, performative action with legal consequences that are here presupposed to be negative for the Target and blameworthy for the Agent.⁵² The Target of the gesture phrase, the orphan, who is introduced by the preposition ‘*al*’, could be interpreted either as a direct addressee of the gesture or as a third person referent. As we have seen, the same preposition, when used with this idiom in the context of destruction or exertion of supernatural power, marks a direct addressee and can be translated “against.” However, the closest semantic and contextual parallel for the phrase in this passage is *נֹסֵעַ יָעַד ‘al T_{ref}* “lift up the hand concerning T_{ref}” (discussed below), which occurs in the context of taking an oath. In that phrase, the Target is not a direct participant in the speech act but is targeted indirectly as a third person referent. The gesture and accompanying speech act have consequences for the Target but are not cast as being addressed to the Target. Given this parallel, the translation “concerning” for the preposition ‘*al*’ would seem appropriate for these phrases in this context.⁵³

Book of Job: A Commentary (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1985), 436; David Wolfers, *Deep Things out of Darkness* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 356.

⁵¹ Dhorme, *Le livre de Job*, 418; Habel, *Book of Job*, 436; Wolfers, *Deep Things out of Darkness*, 356.

⁵² A minority of biblical scholars interprets the gesture here as one of menacing or preparing to strike, thus perhaps not a formal legal gesture. See Dhorme, *Le livre de Job*, 418; Marvin H. Pope, *The Anchor Bible: Job* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1973), 234 (cf. also the German Einheitsübersetzung, *wenn meine Hand der Waise drohte* “if my hand has threatened the orphan”). However, these commentators assume that the verb *heniʰp* is to be translated “shake” or “swing,” which, as we have seen, is incorrect. The more correct translation “elevate” or “raise” suggests a formal action, though it is conceivable that it refers to raising the hand to strike. Proposals regarding the function of this gesture will be discussed in more detail in chapter 5.

⁵³ BDB, 754, definition 1.f.g., mentions the use of the preposition in this sense with verbs of speaking and commanding, which are not far in function from the performative legal action envisaged here. Most translators render the preposition as “against” (KJV, NIV, RSV, NJB, Jastrow, Gordis, Gibson, Habel), which may be taken in a direct or an indirect sense. For example, one may vote “against” another without directly addressing that person (cf. Gibson, *Job*, 216-17: “the arm or hand that had...been raised to vote against some unfortunate person”). None of the commentators of which the present author is aware has articulated a viewpoint on the exact sense of the preposition here.

In one passage, *heniʿp yɔd* is parallel to lifting a banner or standard. The phrase here occurs without any complement.

Isaiah 13:2 ʿal har-nišpɛ^h šəʿu^w-nes həri^ymu^w qo^{wl} ləhem **həni^ypu^w yɔd** wəyɔboʿu^w piṯe^y
nədi^ybi^ym
Upon a bare mountain lift up a standard; raise (your) voice to them; **elevate (your) hand**, that they may come to the Noble Gates.

Though the Target is unexpressed, it is evident from the second parallel colon (*həri^ymu^w qo^{wl} ləhem* “raise (your) voice to them”) and from the following purpose clause (*wəyɔboʿu^w* “that they might come”) that there is an implied plural Target. Based on the parallelism and the purpose clause, the gesture described here appears to be a signal to gather.⁵⁴ The gesture phrase in this context is similar to *nəšəʿ yɔd* in Isaiah 49:22 (see below).

Finally, in one narrative passage, *heniʿp yɔd* is used in the context of healing a person of leprosy. The full phrase is *heniʿp yɔd ʿel-T* “elevate the hand toward T.”

2 Kings 5:11 wayyiqšop na^ʿa^mon wayyelak wayyoʿmer hinne^h ʿomarti^y ʿelay yešeʿ yəšə^w
wəʿomad wəqəroʿ bəšem-YHWH ʿelohə^yw **wəheniʿp yɔdo^w ʿel-**
hamməqə^wm wəʿosap hamməšoroʿ^ʿ
Naaman was angry, went away, and said, “Behold, I said to myself, ‘He will certainly come out, stand, call on the name of Yahweh his God, **elevate his hand toward the (diseased) spot**, and cure the leper.’”

It is possible to understand the contextual type here as that of destruction or exertion of supernatural power (the first contextual type of *heniʿp yɔd* described above). The preposition *ʿel-*, which precedes the Target, may be used in place of *ʿal* with the hostile sense of “against,”⁵⁵ and the gesture may be interpreted as an exertion of supernatural power against the diseased spot in

⁵⁴ Cf. Ackroyd, “*yād*,” in *TDOT*, 5:415.

⁵⁵ Cf. C. F. Burney, *Notes on the Hebrew Text of the Books of Kings* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1903), 280.

order to remove the disease or change the skin.⁵⁶ However, it is important to note that the biblical narrator puts this phrase in the mouth of a non-Israelite, the Syrian commander Naaman. Naaman’s expectation of what the Agent (the prophet Elisha) would do might express a caricatured conception of non-Israelite practice.⁵⁷ Consequently, it would be wise to avoid classing this example in the same contextual type with others occurring in Hebrew literature and sharing the basic gesture phrase *heni’p yəd*.

2.2.6. *her’ə^h naḥat zəro^a* ‘“Display the Might of the Arm”’

One of the idioms used to express the idea of baring the arm is *her’ə^h naḥat zəro^a* ‘“display the might of the arm.”’ This idiom is used, without additional complements, in the context of a prophecy of divine intervention, where the Agent of the gesture is Yahweh.

Isaiah 30:30 wəhišmi^{ya}‘ YHWH ’et-ho^wd qo^wlo^w wənaḥat zəro^w‘ o^w yar’ ε^h bəza‘ ap’ ap
wələhab’ eš’ o^wkelə^h nēpeš wəzērem wə’ēben bōrəd
Yahweh will cause the majesty of his voice to be heard, **the might of his arm he will display**, with raging anger and consuming flame, storm, cloudburst, and hailstones.

The word *naḥat* that occurs in this idiom has been the subject of divergent opinions. This noun, which occurs only here, was traditionally understood to mean “descent” (related to the verb *nəḥet* “go down, descend”).⁵⁸ The suggestion that this is a loanword from Egyptian *nḥt* “strength, victory” was first made by Maximilian Ellenbogen and has been accepted by Donald

⁵⁶ This kind of interpretation is taken by Gwilym H. Jones, *1 and 2 Kings, Volume II* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 417, who compares the “magic rite” in this passage with “the potency of the outstretched hand in Exod. 8:5; 14:21,” where the idiom used is *nəḥə^h yəd* (q.v.). Cf. also Ackroyd, “yād,” in *TDOT*, 5:415.

⁵⁷ An assumption of caricature is implied in commentaries such as that of Richard D. Nelson, *First and Second Kings* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1987), 178, who paraphrases Naaman’s words as, “The prophet should have come out to me...and performed the sort of hocus-pocus I expect.”

⁵⁸ BDB, 639.

Redford.⁵⁹ The meaning of “strength” for this noun has also been argued from the standpoint of Semitic etymology.⁶⁰ In addition, there is another Hebrew noun that is identical in form but has the meaning “quietness, rest,” with which *naḥat* in Isaiah 30:30 has been confused.⁶¹ Aside from etymological considerations, the meaning “strength, might” seems to work best in the context of this passage. Displaying (literally “causing to see”) the *naḥat* of the arm is here parallel to causing to hear the *ho^wd* “splendor, majesty, vigor” of the voice, *ho^wd* being a quality and not a direction of motion.⁶² Just as the muscles of the arm are visible indicators of strength that can be “displayed,” the pitch and timbre of the voice are audible indicators of *ho^wd*. Finally, as will be

⁵⁹ WĀS 2:314-317; Maximilian Ellenbogen, *Foreign Words in the Old Testament: Their Origin and Etymology* (London 1962), 112; Donald Redford, *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel in Ancient Times* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 385.

⁶⁰ See BDB, 629, 639. Relevant to the etymology of this word is the Ugaritic verb *nḥt* which occurs in the Ba‘lu epic (*KTU* 1.2 IV 11: *kṭr ṣmdm . ynḥt / wyp`r . ṣmthm* “Kôtharu prepared two maces; he pronounced their names”) and in the Birth of the Gracious and Beautiful Gods (*KTU* 1.23:37, 40, 43: *il . ḥṯh . nḥt / il . ymn . mṯ . ydh* “Ilu prepares his staff; ‘Ilu grasps his hand-staff in his right hand”). Some also restore a word from the same root in a broken context in the tale of Aqhatu (*KTU* 1.17 VI 9: [...]*ḥtn . qn . yṣbt*). Robert M. Good, “Hebrew and Ugaritic *nḥt*,” *UF* 17 (1986): 153-56, argues that this verb in both Ugaritic and Hebrew (2 Samuel 22:35) and the Hebrew noun *nḥt* (Isaiah 30:30) mean “to strengthen” and “strength” respectively. This view challenges the more traditional rendering of the Ugaritic verb as the causative of “to lower” (see, e.g., *DULAT* 2:628). However, Josef Tropper, “Akkadisch *nūḥḥutu* und die Repräsentation des Phonems /h/ im Akkadischen,” *ZA* 85 (1995): 58-66, connects the Ugaritic verb with Arabic *naḥata* “to hew, cut, form” and Akkadian *nūḥḥutu* “to trim, clip (timber, wings, horns, etc.),” arguing for a meaning “to fashion (weapons)” for the Ugaritic word. Tropper’s argument seems convincing to the present writer for two reasons. First, in its two clearly attested instances in Ugaritic, the word is used only with weapons, which does not accord very well with the meanings “to bring down” or “to strengthen.” Second, studies subsequent to Tropper’s have vindicated the consonant correspondence between West Semitic /h/ and East Semitic /ḥ/. See, in particular, William W. Hallo, “A Ugaritic Cognate for Akkadian *ḥitpu*?” in *Ki Baruch Hu: Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Judaic Studies in Honor of Baruch A. Levine*, ed. Robert Chazan, William W. Hallo, and Lawrence H. Schiffman (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1999), 43-50; John Huehnergard, “Akkadian *ḥ* and West Semitic **h*,” in *Studia Semitica*, ed. Leonid Kogan (Moscow: Russian State University for the Humanities, 2003), 102-19. Huehnergard argues that, since there is no conditioning environment that consistently occurs in examples of this correspondence, these examples can be taken as proof of the existence of a fourth *h*-like phoneme in Proto-Semitic. Huehnergard suggests, on phonological grounds, that this phoneme was a glottalized /ḥ/ (**ḥ̣* / *ḥ̣*). To summarize, the case seems to be that there are three relevant roots: 1) **nḥ*’t “to cut, hew, fashion” (becoming West Semitic *nḥt*: Arabic, also Ugaritic with the narrowed meaning “to fashion or prepare a weapon”; East Semitic *nḥt* “to cut, clip”); 2) **nḥt* “to descend” (Hebrew, Aramaic); and 3) **nḥt* “be strong” (Egyptian *nḥt*, Hebrew *nḥt* in Isaiah 30:30). Given that the existence of a root *nḥt* meaning “strengthen” in Hebrew outside of Isaiah 30:30 is questionable and that the usage here is very close to Egyptian, it is possible that either the word itself or its usage in this context is attributable to Egyptian influence.

⁶¹ For example, Yoshiyuki Muchiki, *Egyptian Proper Names and Loanwords in North-West Semitic* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1999), 250, rejects the idea that *naḥat* in Isaiah 30:30 is a loanword from Egyptian on the grounds that the meaning “descent” is well attested for this Hebrew noun; he is presumably thinking of the well-attested noun meaning “quietness, rest.”

⁶² BDB, 217, definition 2. Cf. definitions 3.b., 3.c., and 4.

shown below, other phrases describing baring the arm (not bringing down the arm) in contexts very similar to that in Isaiah 30:30 argue that the arm itself and not its movement is what is displayed in Isaiah 30:30.⁶³

2.2.7. *heriʼm yəd* “Raise the Hand”

The full gesture phrase *heriʼm yəd bəl* “raise the hand with I” is used three times in the context of exertion of supernatural power.

- Exodus 7:20 wayya^{ʿa}su^w-ken moše^h wə^ʾah^aron ka^ʾašer šiwwə^h YHWH wayyərēm **bammaṭṭe^h** wayyak ʼet-hammayim ʼašer bayʼor lə^ʿe^yne^y par^ʿo^h u^wlə^ʿe^yne^y ʼabədo^yw wayyehəpəku^w kəl-hammayim ʼašer bayʼor lədom
- Moses and Aaron did so, as Yahweh commanded. **He raised (his hand) with the staff** and smote the water that was in the stream (i.e. the Nile) in the sight of Pharaoh and of his servants. Then all the water that was in the stream turned to blood.
- Exodus 17:11-12 (11) wəhəyo^h ka^ʾašer **yəriʼm moše^h yədo^w** wəgəbar yiśrəʼel wəka^ʾašer yəni^{ya}h yədo^w wəgəbar ʼaməleq (12) wi^yde^y moše^h kəbedi^ym wayyiqḥu^w-ʼəben wayyošī^ymu^w taḥtə^yw wayyešəb ʼəle^yhə wə^ʾah^aron wəḥu^wr təmaku^w bəyo^{do}^yw mizze^h ʼəḥəd u^wmizze^h ʼəḥəd wayhi^y yədo^yw ʼəmu^wno^h ʼad-bo^ʾ haššəməš
- (11) Whenever **Moses would raise his hand**, Israel would prevail, but when he would rest his hand, Amalek would prevail. (12) Moses’ hands being heavy, they took a stone and put (it) under him, he sat on it, and Aaron and Hur held his hands, one on one side and the other on the other side, so that his hands were steady until sunset.
- Numbers 20:11 **wayyərēm moše^h ʼet-yədo^w** wayyak ʼet-hassela^ʿ bəmaṭṭehu^w pa^ʿaməyim wayyeṣə^ʾu^w mayim rabbi^ym wəttešt hə^ʿədo^h u^wbə^ʿi^yrəm

⁶³ Other considerations are inconclusive in determining the meaning of *naḥat* in Isaiah 30:30. While it is true that fire, anger, storm, cloudburst, and hailstones are things that “descend” (figuratively in the case of anger), it could as easily be said that they are manifestations of strength or might. Psalm 38:3 could provide support for the idea of God’s hand descending in punishment: *kī ʾhišṣəʿkə niḥ^atu^w bī wəttinḥat ʾəlay yədekə* “for your arrows sunk into me, your hand descended upon me.” Yet in view of recent developments in the etymology of roots resembling *nḥt* (see note above), one could propose that the root has different meanings here as well, thus perhaps “for your arrows cut (< **nḥ*ʼt) into me, your hand was strong (< **nḥt*) upon me.” A new, thorough study of words having the root consonants *n-h-t* in Hebrew is needed. In short, neither context nor parallel phrases are unequivocal in supporting a meaning of “descent” for the word in Isaiah 30:30.

Moses raised his hand and smote the rock with his staff twice, much water came out, and the congregation and their cattle drank.

In Exodus 7:20, the Sender (the Agent's hand, which must have been raised with the staff) is unexpressed. Most translate as "he raised the staff" or similarly, as if "staff" were the direct object of the verb.⁶⁴ However, some understand the syntax differently, as if the phrase is elliptical, with "hand" being implied.⁶⁵ The latter interpretation is to be preferred here. First, the idiom *nɔʔɔʰ yɔd* "extend the hand," which is very similar in phrase structure to *heriʸm yɔd* but which occurs far more frequently, shows elliptical phrasing like the one here in Exodus 7:20 alongside more explicit phrasing. Compare, for example, *nɔʔɔʰ yɔd bəmaʔʔεʰ* "extend the hand with a staff" in Exodus 8:1, 13; also *nɔʔɔʰ bəkiʸdoʷn* "extend (the hand) with a sword" interchanging with both *nɔʔɔʰ yɔd* "extend the hand" and *nɔʔɔʰ yɔd bəkiʸdoʷn* "extend the hand with a sword" in Joshua 8:18-19, 26. Second, the idiom *heriʸm yɔd* also occurs in the War Scroll of the Dead Sea Scrolls (1QM) in a context of destruction in warfare, and in at least one of these instances, the full phrase occurs without ellipsis: *ʾl yśrʾl mrym ydw b[...]t plʾw* "the God of Israel is raising his hand in/with his wondrous [...]" (1QM 15:13); *yrymw ʾyś ydw bkly mlhmtw* "each man shall raise his hand with his weapon" (1QM 16:6-7). Thus *wayyɔrem bammaʔʔεʰ* is to be considered an elliptical form of the fuller phrasing *wayyɔrem yɔd(oʷ) bammaʔʔεʰ* "he raised (his)

⁶⁴ The Vulgate renders the clause *et elevans virgam* "and lifting up the rod (accusative)." Most English translations follow suit (KJV, NIV, RSV, NRSV, and NJB). The major German, French, and Italian translations that we have surveyed do likewise: *er erhob den Stab* or similar, *il leva la verge* or similar, and *egli alzò il bastone* or similar. Even the Arabic Van Dyke translation translates as *rafaʾa l-ʾaṣā* "he raised the staff." Francis Brown in BDB, 927, definition 1.a., lists this passage among those where the rod is a direct object of the verb *heriʸm*.

⁶⁵ The Septuagint, perhaps literalistically, translates as *kai eparas tē rhabdō autou* "and having raised with his rod." William H. C. Propp, *The Anchor Bible: Exodus 1-18* (New York: Doubleday, 1999), 325, translates as "he raised (his arm) with the rod," explicitly noting that "[t]he language is elliptical."

hand with the staff,” in which the direct object (the Sender) is expressed without a preposition, and the prepositional phrase with *bə* expresses the instrument of the action.⁶⁶

The example from Exodus 17 presents many textual difficulties. In verse 11, the consonantal text and the Qere (the traditional vocalized text) agree in having the reading *yədo* “his hand,” but the Samaritan Pentateuch and other versions have *ydyw* “his hands,” which would agree with verse 12, where the reading is the invariant *ydyw* and where the context suggests that two hands are involved. In verse 9, Moses says that he will stand on the top of the mountain “with the staff of God in [his] hand” (singular), though the staff is not mentioned in the actual gesture in verse 11. There are also problems in verse 12, the most notable being the fact that the adjective *kəbedi*’m “heavy” (masculine plural) does not agree in gender with the noun it modifies, *yədayim* “hands” (feminine).⁶⁷

It is very tempting to emend this passage to make the number of hands consistent. It would be particularly easy to emend the singular *yədo* to a plural *yədōw* in verse 11. The plural reading “hands” is supported by the Samaritan Pentateuch, the Septuagint, the Syriac, the Targums, and some Hebrew versions.⁶⁸ Further, there are other places in the Masoretic text of

⁶⁶ S. R. Driver in BDB, 90, definition III.4. of the preposition *bə*, lists Exodus 7:20 among other passages where “the object of an action may be treated as the instrument by which it is accomplished,” adding that this example is “unusual.” He cites the occurrence of *heni*’a ‘ *bəro* ’š “shake with the head” alongside *heni*’a ‘ *ro* ’š “shake the head,” which is similar to the occurrence of *heri*’m *bammatte*’h “raise with the staff” alongside *heri*’m *matte*’h “raise the staff.” Cf. GKC §119q; Joüon §125m. Raising an object, however, is a different kind of action from shaking the head, which may be why Driver considers this example unusual. To wit, raising an object requires the simultaneous raising of something else, namely the hand, and this permits a more complicated argument structure. In English grammar, when the more complicated structure is used, the hand tends to be conceptualized as the instrument of the action, as in “Moses raised the staff with his hand”; see Charles J. Fillmore, “Types of Lexical Information,” in *Semantics: An Interdisciplinary Reader in Philosophy, Linguistics and Psychology*, ed. Danny D. Steinberg and Leon A. Jakobovits (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 376-77. In Hebrew, however, the conceptualization was apparently different, as it is consistently the staff that is marked with the preposition. If our analysis is correct, then, the staff seems to have been considered the instrument of the act of raising the hand.

⁶⁷ For other issues in this verse, cf. Propp, *Exodus 1-18*, 614, 618.

⁶⁸ Propp (ibid.) decides along these lines, as do NIV and NJB.

the Pentateuch where consonantal *ydw* represents the plural *yḏḏw* “his hands.”⁶⁹ However, neither a consistent singular reading nor a consistent plural reading would solve all of the textual problems. From a systematic perspective, one expects the singular in the gesture idiom itself, since there are other instances of *heriʿm yḏ* in a supernatural destructive context but none of *heriʿm yḏayim*. Of course, this could have been a motivation for incorrectly copying *ydyw* as *ydw* or for incorrectly vocalizing *ydw* as a singular noun. However, from an interpretive standpoint, it is not very difficult to understand the text precisely as it stands, with variation in the number of hand(s). Moses could very well have been doing something different with the hand that is not raised, so that only one hand is mentioned as being raised but both hands are in need of being propped up. All this evidence being considered, the simplest solution, even though not an entirely satisfactory one, is to leave the text precisely as it stands in Codex Leningradensis, that is, with variation in the number of hand(s) (“Moses raised/rested his hand” in verse 11, plural “hands” in verse 12).⁷⁰ In this (albeit tentative) solution, the gesture phrase is one more example of “raise the hand” (singular) in the context of destruction or exertion of supernatural power.

Indicators of the contextual type in these passages include the result of the gesture, which is violent and/or supernatural. Both Exodus 7:20 and Numbers 20:11 have a result clause with the verb *hikkḏh* “smite.” The Agent in all three examples is Moses, and the staff is also present in all three examples, though only in Exodus 7:20 is it explicitly in the role of Instrument in the gesture phrase itself.

⁶⁹ Leviticus 9:22; 16:21. The same phenomenon occurs in Ezekiel 43:26. Cf. Propp, *Exodus 1-18*, 614; Francis I. Andersen and A. Dean Forbes, *Spelling in the Hebrew Bible* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1986), 62; James Barr, *The Variable Spellings of the Hebrew Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 131-37.

⁷⁰ The same solution seems to have been reached by KJV, RSV, and NRSV.

heriʿm yəd is also used in the context of rebellion against a king in the full gesture phrase

heriʿm yəd bəT “raise the hand against T.”

1 Kings 11:26-27 (26) wəyərōb ʿōm bēn-nəbōt ʿēprōtiʸ min-haššəredō^h wəšem ʿimmo^w šəru^{w ʿ} ɔ^h
(2x) ʾiššō^h ʾalmōnō^h ʿēbəd lišlomo^h wayyərēm yəd bammələk (27) wəzē^h
haddōbōr ʾāšer-heriʿm yəd bammələk

(26) Now Jeroboam the son of Nebat, an Ephraimite from Zeredah, whose mother’s name was Zeruah, (she being) a widow, (he being) a servant of Solomon, **he raised (his) hand against the king**, (27) and this is the matter in which **he raised (his) hand against the king**.

Finally, *heriʿm yəd* is used once in an oath context. The full phrase is *heriʿm yəd ʿel-T*

“raise the hand toward T.”

Genesis 14:22-23 (22) wayyo ʿmer ʾabrōm ʿel-melek sedom h^ariʿmotiʸ yōdiʸ ʿel-YHWH ʿel
ʿelyo^wn qone^h šōmayim wə ʿōrēš (23) ʾim-miḥu^wt wə ʿad šəro^wk-na ʿal wə ʾim-
ʿeqqāḥ mikkōl-ʾāšer-lōk wəlo ʾto ʾmar ʾaniʸ hē ʿšartiʸ ʿet-ʾabrōm

(22) Abram said to the king of Sodom, “**I raise my hand to Yahweh El Elyon**, creator of heaven and earth: (23) If, from a thread to a sandal-thong, I take anything that is yours, ...! You shall not say, then, ‘I made Abraham rich.’”

The oath context here is clearly indicated by a conditional clause with the particle *ʿim* “if” and an elided main clause.⁷¹ Accordingly, most authorities agree in interpreting the gesture here as one of oath-taking. Targum Neofiti adds *bšbw ʿh* “in oath” directly after the translation of the gesture phrase, and both Rashi and Ibn Ezra explicitly interpret the raising of the hand here as

⁷¹ Blane Conklin, *Oath Formulas in Biblical Hebrew* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 31-45. One might also note the presence of the phrase *miḥu^wt wə ʿad šəro^wk-na ʿal* “from a thread to a sandal-thong,” which is reminiscent of formulae found in Aramaic contracts and Akkadian treaty texts. See Yochanan Muffs, “Abraham the Noble Warrior: Patriarchal Politics and Laws of War in Ancient Israel,” *JJS* 33 (1982): 81-107. In our translation of this verse, the ellipsis points and exclamation mark stand for the main clause, which is presumably left unspoken for dramatic effect or because the consequence of the oath being false would be too disastrous to mention. A more explicit translation of Abram’s speech, making clear the oath context and the nature of the elided main clause, would be, “**I raise my hand to Yahweh El Elyon**, creator of heaven and earth, (in oath as follows): / If, from a thread to a sandal-thong, I take anything that is yours, (may the unmentionable occur)!”

an oath-taking gesture.⁷² However, in Targum Onkelos, the word following the translation of the gesture phrase is *bšlw* “in prayer.”⁷³ Following this interpretation, one could read the consonantal Hebrew text’s *ydy* as *yoday* “my hands” instead of *yadi* “my hand,” thus linking this gesture phrase to *נָסַוּ יָדָיִם*, *נָסַוּ קַפָּיִם*, *פָּרָאֵם קַפָּיִם*, *פֵּרָאֵם קַפָּיִם*, and *שִׁטָּחַ קַפָּיִם*, which describe prayer gestures involving two hands (see under the respective phrases). Support for this reading could be found in the Aramaic inscription Panammu I (KAI 214:29-30), which describes enunciating an oath with both hands raised “to the god of [the Agent’s] father” ([y]š’ *ydyh l’lh ’bh*). In both Panammu I and Genesis 14:22, the oath itself could be interpreted as being addressed to the deity, like a prayer. However, if both hands were raised in Genesis 14:22, yet another option would be to interpret it simply as a two-handed oath gesture like that in Daniel 12:7 (see discussion under *heri’y m yomi’n u’šamo ’l*). However, among the ancient textual witnesses which mark a distinction between singular and plural “hand(s)” in Genesis 14:22 (including the Masoretic Hebrew versions, the Septuagint, and the Vulgate), all agree in taking the noun as singular. This evidence makes it most likely that the proper contextual type for this gesture phrase is one of oath-taking.

Many interpreters of this passage take the verb *h^ari’y moti’y* as an instantaneous perfective “I raise,” which would mean that Abram takes the oath as he is standing before the king of Sodom and that the gesture phrase is part of the utterance of this oath.⁷⁴ It is equally possible to

⁷² *The Palestinian Targum to the Pentateuch: Codex Vatican (Neofiti 1)* (Jerusalem: Makor, 1970), 1:25; Jacob ben Hayim ibn Adoniyah, ed., *Biblia Rabbinica: A Reprint of the 1525 Venice Edition* (Jerusalem: Makor, 1972), 40.

⁷³ *Biblia Rabbinica*, p. 40.

⁷⁴ GKC §106i; Joüon §112f; *IBHS* §30.5.1d; Moshe Weinfeld, *Sefer Breshit* (Tel Aviv: S. L. Gardon, 1975), 76 (in Hebrew); Claus Westermann, *Genesis 12-36: A Continental Commentary* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1995), 187. Similarly, the Vulgate uses a present tense verb: *levo manum meam* “I raise my hand.” Conklin, *Oath Formulas*, 16, translates the perfective verb here and elsewhere as a performative, “I hereby raise my hand.” This translation with “hereby” is problematic, since it implies that the utterance somehow effects the movement of the hand. Cf. John L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), 57-58, on the function of “hereby” in performative utterances. One could posit that the expression “raise the hand” is an idiomatic substitute for a speech act verb, as Gruber posits for other gesture phrases (Gruber, *Aspects of Nonverbal*

interpret the verb as a reference to an event that occurred prior to Abram’s conversation with the king of Sodom, perhaps before the military expedition described in verses 13-16, or perhaps during his encounter with Melchizedek described in verses 18-20, in which he gave tithes from the booty.⁷⁵ It is not possible to determine with certainty which of these interpretations is correct. Parallels for both interpretations can be found among attestations of the semantically similar idiom *nšw’ ycd ləT* “lift up the hand to T” (discussed below), which also occurs in oath contexts. In support of the first interpretation, which posits that Abram’s oath with uplifted hand “to Yahweh El Elyon” and his verbal declaration of that event “to the king of Sodom” are one and the same, reference could be made to Deuteronomy 32:40-41. Here Yahweh, speaking through Moses to the children of Israel, refers to making an oath with uplifted hand “to the sky” (*‘el-šmayim*).⁷⁶ The gesture in Genesis 14:22-23 could be interpreted similarly as an oath with hand raised upward, with Yahweh El Elyon understood as a Directional Target (note the directionality implicit in *‘elyoʷn*, literally “high”).⁷⁷ In support of the second interpretation, *nšw’ ycd* frequently occurs with the verb in perfective aspect in descriptions of past events, and the human Target of the gesture phrase (following the preposition *lə*) is the original addressee of the oath

Communication, 17-23), so that “I hereby raise my hand (that...)” really means “I hereby swear (that...)” (cf. NJB, “But Abram replied to the king of Sodom, ‘I swear by God Most High...’”). However, as discussed in section 2.2.23 below, Gruber’s proposal has its own problems, not least of which is the lack of reliable criteria by which to apply it. If the expression “I raise my hand” refers to the physical performance of a hand gesture, which we hold to be the case in the absence of evidence to the contrary, then the adverb “hereby” is inappropriate. Nevertheless, Conklin’s use of “hereby” may be due to a sense that the gesture itself has a function similar to that of a performative utterance, and we shall see in chapter 5 that this sense about the gesture is likely correct.

⁷⁵ This interpretation is explicitly articulated already by John Gill, *An Exposition of the Old Testament* (London: George Keith, 1763), 99. Cf. NIV and NRSV; also E. A. Speiser, *The Anchor Bible: Genesis* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1964), 100, 104-5. If an event prior to the campaign is referred to, a parallel could be found in *KTU* 1.14 iv 34-43, in which Kirta, on his way to besiege a city, visits the shrine of the goddess ʾAthiratu of Tyre and makes a vow. Note that in this interpretation, if the second person pronoun in *lšk* “yours” in verse 23 refers to the king of Sodom, it would involve a shift of person, since the king of Sodom would have been referred to in the third person in Abram’s dialogue with *‘el ʾelyoʷn*. Cf. a similar shift in person in Deuteronomy 4:21.

⁷⁶ Note, however, that the verb in Deuteronomy 32:40-41 is not perfective but imperfective.

⁷⁷ This would imply that Yahweh El Elyon, as Directional Target, is not explicitly a participant in the oath. Alternatively, it is conceivable that Yahweh is “invoked” in some sense through the gesture, thus becoming a participant in the oath, e.g. as an oblique addressee of the oath (similarly to the English idiom, verbally addressed to another person, “I swear to God”), as a witness, as a guarantor, or as a punisher in case the oath is broken. Cf. Seely, “Raised Hand of God,” 416; Conklin, *Oath Formulas*, 14-15.

utterance, shifted to third person in the current speech event (Ezekiel 20:5-6, 15, 23; Psalm 106:26-27). The Target of the gesture phrase in Genesis 14:22-23, Yahweh El Elyon, could similarly be understood as the original addressee of an oath made prior to Abram’s speech to the king of Sodom. Since both the instantaneous and the past-reference interpretations can be supported by parallel usage elsewhere, our decision to translate as an instantaneous perfective, which follows the majority of recent scholarship on this passage, should not be taken as a firm stance.

2.2.8. *heriʿm yamiʿn uʿšəmoʿl* “Raise the Right Hand and the Left Hand”

An idiom explicitly describing the raising of both hands is used in one passage in Daniel in the context of an oath.

Daniel 12:7 *wəʿəšmaʿ ʿet-həʿiʿyš ləbuʿš habbaddiʿm ʿašer mimmaʿal ləmeʿmeʿ hayʿor wayyərəm yamiʿnoʿ uʿšəmoʿloʿ* ʿel-haššəmayim wayyiššəbaʿ bəḥeʿ həʿoʿwəlm kiʿ ləmoʿed moʿaʿdiʿm wəḥešiʿ uʿkəkalloʿt nappəš yad-ʿam-qodeš tikləʿnoʿ kəl-ʿelleʰ

I heard the man dressed in linen, who was above the water of the stream. **He raised his right hand and his left hand** to heaven and swore by the life of the Eternal One that for a certain appointed time and a half, when the shattering of the holy people’s hand is fulfilled, all these things will be fulfilled.

The oath context in this passage is made explicit by the verb *hiššəbaʿ* “swear.”

The assumption that this passage describes an authentic Israelite gesture has been challenged recently by Eugene P. McGarry.⁷⁸ McGarry argues that the form of this gesture in Daniel 12:7 represents an ancient misreading of a version of Deuteronomy 32:40 that contained two cola describing the use of hands in swearing (like the Septuagint version of this verse).

⁷⁸ Eugene P. McGarry, “The Ambidextrous Angel (Daniel 12:7 and Deuteronomy 32:40): Inner-Biblical Exegesis and Textual Criticism in Counterpoint,” *JBL* 124/2 (2005): 211-28.

McGarry argues that the author of Daniel 12:7 had misread the two cola in the Deuteronomy passage as mutually complementary instead of as synonymous parallels, that is, had understood them as describing the raising of both hands, and imported this misreading into the image of the “ambidextrous angel.” In support of this, McGarry points to a similar authenticating element found in the two oaths: *ḥay ’onokī’ lə’olām* “(by) my life for eternity” (Deuteronomy 32:40) and *bəḥe’ hō’olām* “by the life of the Eternal One” (Daniel 12:7); he also mentions that both oaths take place in the context of discourse regarding divine judgments in the “last days” (*bə’ah^ari’yt hayyōmī’ym*, Deuteronomy 31:29 and Daniel 10:14).⁷⁹

McGarry’s argument is very provocative; however, it does contain some problems. Chief among these is the fact that the phraseology and other aspects of the context in Deuteronomy 32:40 and Daniel 12:7 are not close enough to persuasively demonstrate direct borrowing between the two passages. For example, it is not Yahweh but a “man dressed in linen” who raises his hands in Daniel 12:7, and the verb used is *heri’ym* and not *nōśō’*. The authenticating element “by the life of X” is quite a common feature in oaths, and the rough similarity between the two authenticators in these passages may be ascribed to coincidence.⁸⁰ Likewise, although both passages contain predictions about the “last days,” they have this in common with a number of biblical passages; thus this shared feature may also be ascribed to coincidence.⁸¹ Given the differences just mentioned, together with our incomplete knowledge of the sources available to the author of Daniel 12 and the fact that a common ritual practice (i.e. that of oath-taking) is at issue, it seems somewhat doubtful that this passage in Deuteronomy can be singled out as the

⁷⁹ Ibid., 213-14.

⁸⁰ For the authenticating element “by the life of X,” where X is often a reference to deity, see Conklin, *Oath Formulas*, 24-30. Referring to God as “the Eternal One” in Daniel 12:7 may be connected to concepts of God expressed elsewhere in Daniel as easily as to the language of Deuteronomy 32:40; cf. Daniel 4:31 (verse 34 in English); 6:27 (verse 26 in English).

⁸¹ For the specific expression *’ah^ari’yt hayyōmī’ym*, see BDB, 31, where thirteen occurrences in the Pentateuch and the Prophets are listed. More generally, predictions of future events involving divine judgments against Israel are extremely common in the Hebrew Bible.

cause of the image in Daniel. That the two passages both describe the taking of an oath accompanied by a hand gesture is beyond doubt, but a closer connection between the passages is difficult to prove. Further, the gesture as it stands in Daniel 12:7 is not particularly problematic. Gestures of raising both hands occur in other contexts, including prayer and blessing. The Aramaic inscription Panammu I (*KAI* 214:29-30) mentions a gesture of raising both hands in an oath context (see below).⁸² Thus there seems to be no compelling reason to view the gesture in Daniel 12:7 as unauthentic.

2.2.9. *heriʿš yōdayim* “Stretch Out the Hands with Quick Movement(s)”

This phrase is used once in the Psalms, apparently in a context of praise.

Psalm 68:32 *yēʿtōyū^w ḥašmanni^ym minni^y mišrōyim ku^{wš} tōri^yš yōdō^yw leʾlohi^ym*
 Let bronze⁸³ come from Egypt, let Kush **stretch out its hands** to God.

The verb *heriʿš* is derived from the root *rwš* “run” and is attested elsewhere in the meaning “bring or move quickly.”⁸⁴ The following verse is a call to praise: “Kingdoms of the earth, sing to God, praise the Lord!”

⁸² The relevance of this inscription to the gesture in Daniel is noticed by Åke Viberg, *Symbols of Law: A Contextual Analysis of Legal Symbolic Acts in the Old Testament* (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell International, 1992), 26. McGarry, “Ambidextrous Angel,” 214n5, mentions this inscription, citing Viberg, but he does not comment on its implications for the credibility of the gesture in Daniel 12:7. The verb in the gesture phrase in Panammu I is partially missing; however, it is at least certain that the gesture involves both hands, is performed “to the god of (the Agent’s) father,” and accompanies an oath.

⁸³ The meaning of this word is far from certain. See BDB, 365. The possibility that it is a loanword from Egyptian *hsmn* “bronze” is adopted by RSV.

⁸⁴ BDB, 930.

2.2.10. *ḥōśap zəro*^a “Uncover the Arm”

A second idiom for baring the arm (cf. *ḥer’ō^h naḥat zəro*^a “display the might of the arm” in Isaiah 30:30, discussed above) is *ḥōśap zəro*^a “uncover the arm.” The contextual type is similar: a prophecy of divine action.

Isaiah 52:10	ḥōśap YHWH ’ et-zəro ^{wa} ’ qəḏšō ^w lə’ ^e ne ^y kəl-haggo ^w yim wəro’ ^u w kəl-’apse ^y -’ ^o reš ’et yəšū ^w ’at ’ ^ε lohe ^y nu ^w	Yahweh has uncovered his holy arm in the sight of all the nations; all the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God.
Ezekiel 4:7	wə’ ^{el} -məšo ^w r yəru ^w šōla(y)im təkī ^y n pəne ^y kə u^wzəro ’ ^a kə ḥ ^a šū ^w pə ^h wənibbe’ ^t ə ’ ^o le ^y hə	Direct your face toward the siege of Jerusalem, your arm being uncovered , and prophesy against it.

The Agent in the first passage is Yahweh. In the second passage, Yahweh instructs Ezekiel to bare his arm as part of an action prophecy; thus the gesture is indicative of Yahweh’s action.

2.2.11. *mo’al yədayim* “Putting Up of the Hands”

The phrase *mo’al yədayim* “putting up of the hands” is used in the context of prayer in one passage.

Nehemiah 8:6	waybərək ’ ^ε zrə’ ’ ^{et} -YHWH ḥə’ ^ε lohi ^y m haggədo ^w l wayya’ ^a nu ^w kəl-ḥə’ ^o m ’ ^o men ’ ^o men bəmo’al yəde^yhem wayyiqqədu ^w wayyištəḥ ^a wu laYHWH ’ ^a ppayim ’ ^o ršə ^h	Ezra blessed Yahweh, the Great God, and all the people responded, “Amen, amen” while putting up their hands . They bowed and prostrated to Yahweh with their face to the ground.
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The gesture is preceded by the response “amen, amen” to Ezra’s prayer and is followed by the Agents of the gesture phrase prostrating.

2.2.12. *maś'at kappayim* “Lifting Up of the Palms”

Similarly to *mo'al yodayim* “putting up of the hands,” *maś'at kappayim* “lifting up of the palms” is used once in a context of prayer.

Psalm 141:2 *tikko^wn tēpillōti^y qəṭoret ləpōnē^ykō maś'at kappay minḥat-ʿoreb*
Let my prayer be set before you as incense, **the lifting up of my palms** as
the evening offering.

In this case, the prayer context is evident through parallelism, as the gesture phrase “the lifting up of my palms” is parallel to *tēpillōti^y* “my prayer.”

Unlike *mo'al yodayim* in Nehemiah 8:6, the Agent of *maś'at kappayim* in Psalm 141:2 is singular, and the prayer is a private response to an individual need, as the Psalmist calls to God in verse 1 to come to his aid. These features are shared with the corresponding finite verbal idiom *nōśō' kappayim* (discussed below).

2.2.13. *nigləṭō^h zəro^a* “Of the Arm, Be Revealed”

Another idiom for baring the arm, also found in the book of Isaiah, is *nigləṭō^h zəro^a* “of the arm, be revealed.” The context is similar to that of *her'ō^h naḥat zəro^a* “display the might of the arm” in Isaiah 30:30, namely a prophecy of divine intervention with Yahweh as the Agent of the gesture phrase.

Isaiah 53:1 *mi^y hē'εmi^yn lišmu'ōtenu^w u^wzəro^wa' YHWH 'al-mi^y niglōṭō^h*
Who has believed our report? As for **the arm** of Yahweh, against whom **is it revealed?**

The phrase includes a Target introduced by the preposition *‘al*, but this constituent does not serve to distinguish the gesture phrase from any known phrases using the same verb.

2.2.14. *nəṭṭ^h zəro^a* “Extend the Arm”

The verb *nəṭṭ^h* is frequently used in the formula *bizro^a ‘nəṭṭu^wyə^h* “with an extended arm.”

- Exodus 6:6 *ləken ‘εmor libne^y-yiśrə’el ‘ani^y YHWH wəho^wše’ti^y ‘etkem mittahat siblot mişrayim wəhişşalti^y ‘etkem me‘abodətom wəgə’alti^y ‘etkem **bizro^{wa}‘ nəṭṭu^wyə^h** u^wbişpəṭi^ym gədoli^ym*
 Therefore say to the children of Israel, “I am Yahweh. I have brought you out from under the burdens of Egypt, have snatched you out of servitude to them, and have redeemed you **with an extended arm** and with great judgments.”
- Deuteronomy 4:34 *‘o^w h^anissə^h ‘εlohi^ym ləbo^w’ ləqahat lo^w go^wy miqqereb go^wy bəmassot bə’otot u^wbəmo^wpəti^ym u^wbəmilhəmə^h u^wbəyəd h^azəqə^h **u^wbizro^{wa}‘ nəṭṭu^wyə^h** u^wbəmo^wrə’i^ym gədoli^ym kəkəl ‘aşer-‘əśə^h ləkem YHWH ‘εlohe^ykem bəmişrayim lə‘e^yne^ykə*
 Or has (any) god ventured to come to take for himself a nation from the midst of (another) nation with trials, signs, wonders, warfare, a strong hand, **an extended arm**, and great awesome deeds like what Yahweh your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes?
- Deuteronomy 5:15 *wəzəkarto ki^y-‘εbed həyi^tə bə’erəş mişrayim wayyoši[’]akə YHWH ‘εlohe^ykə mişšəom bəyəd h^azəqə^h **u^wbizro^a‘ nəṭṭu^wyə^h** ‘al-ken šiwwəkə YHWH ‘εlohe^ykə la‘əśə^wt ‘et-yo^wm haššabbət*
 You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt and Yahweh your God brought you out from there with a strong hand **and an extended arm**. Therefore Yahweh your God commanded you to perform (the duty of) the sabbath day.
- Deuteronomy 7:19 *hammassot haggədolot ‘aşer-rə’u^w ‘e^yne^ykə wəhə’otot wəhammopəti^ym wəhayyəd ha^azəqə^h **wəhazzəro^a‘ hannəṭṭu^wyə^h** ‘aşer ho^wši[’]akə YHWH ‘εlohe^ykə ken-ya‘əśə^h YHWH ‘εlohe^ykə ləkəl-hə‘ammi^ym ‘aşer-‘atto^h yəre’ mippəne^yhem*
 As for the great trials which your eyes have seen, the signs, the wonders, the strong hand, **and the extended arm** with which Yahweh your God brought you out, Yahweh your God will do likewise to all the peoples of whom you are afraid.
- Deuteronomy 9:29 *wəhem ‘amməkə wənah^alotəkə ‘aşer ho^wše’tə bəkəh^akə haggədol **u^wbizro^a‘kə hannəṭṭu^wyə^h***

They are your people and your inheritance, whom you brought out with your great power **and with your extended arm**.

Deuteronomy
11:2

wi^yda^ttem hayyo^wm ki^y lo^t 'et-bəne^ykem 'ašer lo^t-yōdā^u wa^t 'ašer lo^t-rō^u 'et-mu^wsar YHWH 'ēlohe^ykem 'et-gōdlo^w 'et-yōdo^w haḥ^azōqō^h **u^wzəro^o 'o^w hannəṭu^wyo^h**

You recognize this day that it was not your children, who do not know and who did not see the discipline of Yahweh your God, his greatness, his strong hand **and extended arm**,

1 Kings 8:41-42

(41) wəgam 'el-hannəkri^y 'ašer lo^t-me^t amməkō yiśrō^{el} hu^w u^wbō^t me^t ereš rəḥō^wqō^h ləma^t an šəmēkō (42) ki^y yišmā^un 'et-šimkō haggōdo^wl wə^t-yōdəkō haḥ^azōqō^h **u^wzəro^ako hannəṭu^wyo^h** u^wbō^t wəhitpallel 'el-habbayit hazze^h

(41) Also the foreigner, who is not of your people Israel but who comes from a far land because of your name— (42) for they will hear of your great name, your strong hand, **and your extended arm**—who comes and prays toward this house,

2 Kings 17:36

ki^y 'im- 'et-YHWH 'ašer he^tlō^h 'etkem me^t ereš mišrayim bəko^aḥ gōdo^wl **u^wbizro^{wa} 'nəṭu^wyo^h** 'oto^w ti^yrō^u wəlo^w tištah^awu^w wəlo^w tizbōḥu^w

But you shall reverence Yahweh, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt with great power **and with an extended arm**, and shall prostrate to him and offer sacrifice to him.

Jeremiah 27:5

'onoki^y 'ōsī^yti^y 'et-hō^t 'oreš 'et-hō^t 'ōdōm wə^t-habbəhemō^h 'ašer 'al-pəne^y hō^t 'oreš bəkoḥi^y haggōdo^wl **u^wbizro^w'i^y hannəṭu^wyo^h** u^wnətatti^yhō la^t 'ašer yošar bə^te^ynōy

It is I who made the earth, humankind, and the beasts which are on the face of the earth with my great power **and my extended arm**, and I have given it to the one who is upright in my sight.

Jeremiah 32:17

'aḥōḥ 'adonōy YHWH hinne^h 'atto^h 'ōsī^yto 'et-haššōmayim wə^t-hō^t 'oreš bəkoḥ^ako haggōdo^wl **u^wbizro^ako hannəṭu^wyo^h** lo^t-yippōle^t mimməkō kōl-dōbōr

Ah, my Lord Yahweh, you made heaven and earth with your great power **and with your extended arm**; nothing can be too wonderful for you (to accomplish).

Jeremiah 32:21

wattoše^t 'et-amməkō 'et-yiśrō^{el} me^t ereš mišrōyim bə^toto^wt u^wbəmo^wpəti^ym u^wbəyōd ḥ^azōqō^h **u^wbə^tezro^{wa} 'nəṭu^wyo^h** u^wbəmo^wrō^t gōdo^wl

You brought out your people Israel from the land of Egypt with signs, wonders, a strong hand, **an extended arm**, and a great awesome deed.

Ezekiel 20:33-34
(2x)

(33) ḥay- 'oni^y nə^tum 'adonōy YHWH 'im-lo^t bəyōd ḥ^azōqō^h **u^wbizro^{wa} 'nəṭu^wyo^h** u^wbəḥemō^h šəpu^wko^h 'emlo^wk 'ale^ykem (34) wəho^wše^tti^y 'etkem min-hō^t ammi^ym wəqibbašti^y 'etkem min-hō^t 'aršo^wt 'ašer nəpo^wšōtem bōm bəyōd ḥ^azōqō^h **u^wbizro^{wa} 'nəṭu^wyo^h** u^wbəḥemō^h šəpu^wko^h

(33) “By my life,” says the Lord Yahweh, “if I do not become your king with a strong hand, **an extended arm**, and poured-out fury, ...! (34) I will bring you out from the peoples and gather you from the lands into which you have been scattered with a strong hand, **an extended arm**, and poured-out fury!”

Psalm 136:10-12 (10) ləmakke^h mişrayim bibko^wre^yhem ki^y lə^owlōm ḥasdo^w (11) wayyo^wşe^ʿ yiśrā^ʿel mitto^wkōm ki^y lə^owlōm ḥasdo^w (12) bəyōd ḥ^azōqō^h **u^wbizro^wa^ʿ** nəṭu^wyō^h ki^y lə^owlōm ḥasdo^w

(10) To the one who smote the firstborn of Egypt, for his mercy is eternal!
 (11) He brought out Israel from their midst, for his mercy is eternal! (12)
 With a strong hand **and an extended arm**, for his mercy is eternal!

2 Chronicles 6:32 wəgam ʿel-hannōkri^y ʿāšer loʿ meʿamməkō yiśrā^ʿel hu^w u^wbō^ʿ meʿereş rəḥō^wqō^h ləmaʿan šimkō haggōdo^wl wəyōdəkō haḥ^azōqō^h **u^wzəro^wʿakō** hannəṭu^wyō^h u^wbō^ʿu^w wəhitpaləluw ʿel-habbayit hazzē^h

Also the foreigner, who is not of your people Israel but who comes from a far land because of your great name, your strong hand, **and your extended arm**—they will come and pray toward this house—

As can be seen from these examples, this phrase describes the means by which Yahweh delivers Israel and performs other mighty acts, such as creating the earth. The phrase is usually conjoined with a preceding phrase, either *bəyōd ḥ^azōqō^h* “with a strong hand” (10 times: Deuteronomy 4:34; 5:15; 7:19; 11:2; 1 Kings 8:42; Jeremiah 32:21; Ezekiel 20:33, 34; Psalm 136:12; 2 Chronicles 6:32) or *bəko^aḥ gōdo^wl* “with great strength” (3 times: Deuteronomy 9:29; 2 Kings 17:36; Jeremiah 32:17), though in the first passage, Exodus 6:6, neither of these phrases precedes.

2.2.15. *nəṭō^h yōd* “Extend the Hand”

The most common gesture idiom in Biblical Hebrew used in contexts of destruction or exertion of supernatural power is *nəṭō^h yōd* “extend the hand.” In all of its occurrences, the Agent of the gesture phrase is God or his commissioned servant. When used with an inanimate Target, there is frequently a conjoined clause describing the changing of elements, the cleaving of rocks, the dividing of seas, etc. When the Target is animate, there is frequently a conjoined clause

describing mass destruction. The full gesture phrase used in these contexts is *nəʔə^h yəd (bəI) ‘al-*
T “extend the hand (with I) against T.”⁸⁵

Exodus 7:4-5 (4) wəlo’ -yišma’ ʾalekem par’ o^h wənəʔatti^y ʾet-yədi^y bəmišrəyim wəho^wʂe’ ti^y ʾet-šib’ otay ʾet-ʾammi^y bəne^y-yišrə’ el me’ ereš mišrayim bišpəti^ym gədoli^ym (5) wəyədə’ u^w mišrayim ki^y-ʾani^y YHWH **binəʔoti^y ʾet-yədi^y ‘al-mišrəyim** wəho^wʂe’ ti^y ʾet-bəne^y-yišrə’ el mitto^wkəm

(4) Pharaoh will not listen to you, but I will put forth my hand against Egypt and bring my armies, my people, the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt with great judgments. (5) Egypt will know that I am Yahweh **when I extend my hand against Egypt** and bring the children of Israel out of their midst.

Exodus 7:19 wayyo’ mer YHWH ʾel-mošə^h ʾemor ʾel-ʾah^aron qaḥ maṭṭəkə **u^wnəʔə^h-yədəkə** ʾal-me^yme^y mišrayim ʾal nah^arotəm ʾal-yə’ ore^yhem wə’ al-ʾagme^yhem wə’ al kəl-miqwe^h me^yme^yhem wəyihyu^w-dəm wəhəyə^h dəm bəkəl-ʾereš mišrayim u^wbə’ eši^ym u^wbə’ aḇni^ym

Yahweh said to Moses, “Say to Aaron, ‘Take your staff **and extend your hand against the waters of Egypt**—against their rivers, their streams, and their ponds, that is, all their bodies of water—and they will become blood.’ There will be blood all over the land of Egypt, even on their trees and rocks.”

Exodus 8:1-2 (2x) (1) wayyo’ mer YHWH ʾel-mošə^h ʾemor ʾel-ʾah^aron **nəʔə^h ʾet-yədəkə** bəmaṭṭəkə ʾal-hannəḥərot ʾal-hay’ ori^ym wə’ al-hə’ agammi^ym wəha’ al ʾet-ḥəšpərdə’ i^ym ʾal-ʾereš mišrəyim (2) wayyeṭ ʾah^aron ʾet-yədo^w ʾal me^yme^y mišrəyim watta’ al ḥəšpərdə^a wəttəkəs ʾet-ʾereš mišrəyim

(1) Yahweh said to Moses, “Say to Aaron, ‘**Extend your hand with your staff against the rivers, the streams, and the ponds** and cause the frogs to come up on the land of Egypt.’” (2) **Then Aaron extended his hand against the waters of Egypt**, and the frogs came up and covered the land of Egypt.

Exodus 8:12-13 (2x) (12) wayyo’ mer YHWH ʾel-mošə^h ʾemor ʾel-ʾah^aron **nəʔə^h ʾet-maṭṭəkə** wəhak ʾet-ʾapar ḥə’ oreš wəhəyə^h ləkinnim bəkəl-ʾereš mišrəyim (13) wayya’ a^su^w-ken wayyeṭ ʾah^aron ʾet-yədo^w **bəmaṭṭəhu^w** wayyak ʾet-ʾapar ḥə’ oreš wəttəhi^y ḥakkinnəm bə’ ədəm u^wbəbbəhemə^h kəl-ʾapar ḥə’ oreš ḥəyə^h kinni^ym bəkəl-ʾereš mišrəyim

(12) Yahweh said to Moses, “Say to Aaron, ‘**Extend your staff** and smite the dust of the earth, and it will become lice through the whole land of Egypt.’” (13) Then they did so. Aaron **extended his hand with his staff** and smote the dust of the earth, and the lice appeared on the humans and the beasts. All the dust of the earth became lice through the whole land of Egypt.

⁸⁵ As will be argued in chapter 4, the employment of an Instrument is optional in the gesture itself; thus the Instrument constituent is in parentheses, meaning not only that the constituent can be absent from the gesture phrase, but that the corresponding real-life component of the gesture event may not always be present.

Exodus 9:22-23 (2x) (22) wayyo'mer YHWH 'el-mošeh nāteḥ 'et-yōdākō 'al-haššōmayim wi'hi' bōrōd bēkōl-'ereš mišrōyim 'al-hō'ōdōm wə'al-habbəhemōḥ wə'al kōl-'ešēb haššōdeḥ bə'ereš mišrōyim (23) wayyeṭ mošeḥ 'et-maṭṭehu' 'al-haššōmayim waYHWH nōtan qōlot u'w bōrōd wattih'alak 'eš 'ōršōḥ wayyamṭer YHWH bōrōd 'al-'ereš mišrōyim

(22) Yahweh said to Moses, “**Extend your hand against the sky**, that there might be hail upon the whole land of Egypt, upon the humans, the beasts, and all the plants of the field in the land of Egypt.” (23) **Then Moses extended his staff against the sky**, and Yahweh caused noises and hail, and fire sped to the earth. Yahweh rained hail (down) upon the whole land of Egypt.

Exodus 10:12-13 (2x) (12) wayyo'mer YHWH 'el-mošeh nāteḥ yōdākō 'al-'ereš mišrayim bō'arbeh wəya'al 'al-'ereš mišrōyim wəyo'kal 'et-kōl-'ešēb hō'oreš 'et kōl-'ašer hiš'iy'r habbōrōd (13) wayyeṭ mošeḥ 'et-maṭṭehu' 'al-'ereš mišrayim waYHWH nihag ru'wah qōdi'm bō'oreš kōl-hayyō'w m hahu' wəkōl-hallōyloḥ habboqer hōyōḥ wəru'wah haqqōdi'm nōsō' 'et-hō'arbeh

(12) Yahweh said to Moses, “**Extend your hand against the land of Egypt** for the locusts, that they might come up over the land of Egypt and eat all the plants of the field, all that the hail has let remain.” (13) **Then Moses extended his staff against the land of Egypt**, and Yahweh brought an east wind through the land all that day and all night. When it was morning, the east wind brought locusts.

Exodus 10:21-22 (2x) (21) wayyo'mer YHWH 'el-mošeh nāteḥ yōdākō 'al-haššōmayim wi'hi' ḥōšek 'al-'ereš mišrōyim wəyōmeš ḥōšek (22) wayyeṭ mošeḥ 'et-yōdō' 'al-haššōmōyim wayhi' ḥōšek-'apeloḥ bēkōl-'ereš mišrayim šəlošet yōmi'm

(21) Yahweh said to Moses, “**Extend your hand against the sky**, that there might be darkness over the land of Egypt, (even) that the darkness might be tangible.” (22) **Then Moses extended his hand against the sky**, and there was thick darkness over the whole land of Egypt for three days.

Exodus 14:16 wə'attoḥ hōrem 'et-maṭṭākō u'w nāteḥ 'et-yōdākō 'al-hayyōm u'w bəqō'ehu' wəyōbo' u'w bəney-yiśrō'el bəto'k hayyōm bayyabbōšōḥ

As for you, raise your staff, **extend your hand against the sea** and divide it, that the children of Israel might come through the middle of the sea on dry land.

Exodus 14:21 wayyeṭ mošeḥ 'et-yōdō' 'al-hayyōm wayyo'lek YHWH 'et-hayyōm bəru'wah qōdi'm 'azzōḥ kōl-hallāyloḥ wayyōšēm 'et-hayyōm ləḥōrōbōḥ wayyibbōqə' u'w hammōyim

Then Moses **extended his hand against the sea**, and Yahweh drove the sea (back) by a strong east wind all night. He made the sea into dry land, and the water was divided.

Exodus 14:26-27 (2x) (26) wayyo'mer YHWH 'el-mošē^h nāṭe^h 'et-yōdākō 'al-hayyōm wəyōšubu^w hammayim 'al-miṣrayim 'al-rikbo^w wə'al-pōrōšō^{yw} (27) wayyeṭ mošē^h 'et-yōdo^w 'al-hayyōm wayyōšōb hayyōm lipno^{wt} boqer lə'e^ytōno^w wayna'er YHWH 'et-miṣrayim bəto^{wk} hayyōm

(26) Yahweh said to Moses, “**Extend your hand against the sea**, and the water will return over Egypt, upon its cavalry and upon its chariotry.” (27) Then Moses **extended his hand against the sea**, and the sea returned,⁸⁶ at dawn, to its tide; and Yahweh scattered Egypt in the midst of the sea.

Joshua 8:18-19, 26 (4x) (18) wayyo'mer YHWH 'el-yəho^wšū^a nāṭe^h bakki^ydo^{wn} 'ašer-bəyōdākō 'el-hō'ay ki^y bəyōdākō 'ettānēno^h wayyeṭ yəho^wšū^a bakki^ydo^{wn} 'ašer-bəyōdo^w 'el-hō'ir (19) wəhō'o^wreb qōm māherō^h mimməqo^wmo^w wayyōru^wšū^w kinto^{wt} yōdo^w wayyōbo'u^w hō'ir wayyilkədu^whō waymah^aru^w wayyaššiy^{tu}w 'et-hō'ir bō'eš... (26) wi^yhō^wšū^a lo'-hešiy^b yōdo^w 'ašer nāṭe^h bakki^ydo^{wn} 'ad 'ašer heḥ^rri^ym 'et kəl-yōšəbe^y hō'ōy

(18) Yahweh said to Joshua, “**Extend (your hand) with the sword**⁸⁷ that is in your hand **against**⁸⁸ Ai, because I will deliver it into your hand.” Joshua **extended (his hand) with the sword** that was in his hand **against the city**.

(19) The ambush rose quickly from its place and ran when **he extended his hand**. It entered the city, captured it, hurried, and burned the city with fire...

(26) Joshua did not retract his **hand** which **he had extended with the sword** until he had annihilated all the inhabitants of Ai.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Like the English verb “return,” the Hebrew verb *šwb* sometimes has a transitive sense (BDB, 998, definition 9); thus a translation “and (Moses) returned the sea, at dawn, to its tide” is possible here. However, in view of the rarity of this sense for the Hebrew verb (most of the clear instances are restricted to a single context with the noun *šəbu^{wt}* “captivity”) and the parallelism with verse 26 (where the subject of the verb *šwb* is *hammayim* “the water”), the intransitive sense is to be preferred here.

⁸⁷ The word *kī^ydo^{wn}* is traditionally translated “javelin” and is rendered as such in KJV, NIV, and RSV. The word occurs eight times in the Hebrew Bible (Joshua 8:18, 26; 1 Samuel 17:6, 45; Jeremiah 6:23; 50:42; Job 39:23; 41:21). It also occurs in Ben Sira (46:2) and in the War Scroll of the Dead Sea Scrolls (1Q33 5:7, 11, 12, 14; 6:5). In the War Scroll, it occurs in the spelling *kydn*, perhaps indicating a pronunciation as /kīdān/. The contexts in which it occurs in the War Scroll make it clear that this is not a projectile weapon but a weapon for hand-to-hand combat. The description of the *kydn* in 1Q33 5:11-14 fits best with the idea that it is a scimitar or sickle-sword. In the biblical passages too, the translation “sickle sword” is compatible with the contexts and in some cases (1 Samuel 17:6 and Job 41:21) yields a better sense. Thus, in agreement with Koeler-Baumgartner, NRSV, NJB, and others, we translate this word as “sword” and take it as referring to the Near Eastern sickle-sword known from the Bronze through the Iron Ages. See J. Carmignac, “Précisions apportées au vocabulaire de l’Hebreu biblique par la guerre des fils de lumière contre les fils de ténèbre,” *VT* 5 (1955): 357-59; Karl Georg Kuhn, “Beiträge zum Verständnis der Kriegerrolle von Qumran,” *TLZ* 81 (1956): 25-30; G. Molin, “What is a *Kidon*?” *JSS* 1 (1956): 334-37; Yigael Yadin, *The Scroll of the War of the Sons of Light against the Sons of Darkness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962), 124-31; Othmar Keel, *Wirkmächtige Siegeszeichen im Alten Testament: Ikonographische Studien zu Jos 8:18-26; Ex 17:8-13; 2 Kön 13:14-19 und 1 Kön 22:11* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1974), 21-26; Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *Hebräisches und Aramäisches Lexikon zum Alten Testament*, vol. 2 (Leiden: Brill, 1974), 450 (“Kurzschwert” in War Scroll, “Sichelschwert” in Hebrew Bible).

⁸⁸ The preposition 'el- is used here instead of the expected 'al. On the interchange of these two prepositions, which occurs frequently in the Hebrew Bible, see BDB, 41. Cf. below, Ezekiel 30:25.

⁸⁹ Most translators (KJV, NIV, NRSV, NJB) translate *kī^ydo^{wn}* as if it were the direct object in verses 18 and 26. Their rendering of verse 26 is “his hand with which he extended the sword” or similar. Aside from the fact that we would tend to expect a resumptive pronoun (‘ašer nāṭe^h bakki^ydo^{wn} bo^w), other examples of this idiom show that the

- Isaiah 5:25 (2x) ‘al-ken ḥōrō^h ‘ap-YHWH bə‘ammo^w wayyeṭ yādo^w ‘ōlō^yw wayyakkehu^w wayyirgəzu^w heḥōri^ym wattəhi^y niblōtəm kassu^wḥō^h bəqereb ḥu^wšo^wt bəkōl-zo^t lo^t -šōb ‘appo^w wə‘o^wd yādo^w nəṭu^wyō^h
- Therefore the wrath of Yahweh flared against his people; **he extended his hand against them** and smote them. The mountains trembled; their corpses were like offal in the streets. For all this his wrath did not retract, **his hand** being still **extended**.
- Isaiah 9:10-11 (10) wayśaggeb YHWH ‘et-šore^y rəši^yn ‘ōlō^yw wə‘et-‘oyəbō^yw yəsaksek (11) ‘ārōm miqqədem u^wpəlišti^ym me‘ōḥo^wr wayyo^t kəlu^w ‘et-yišrō^t el bəkōl-pe^h bəkōl-zo^t lo^t -šōb ‘appo^w wə‘o^wd yādo^w nəṭu^wyō^h
- (10) Yahweh exalted the adversaries of Rezin over him and protected his enemies: (11) Aram to the east and the Philistines to the west. They devoured Israel in one mouthful. For all this his wrath did not retract, **his hand** being still **extended**.
- Isaiah 9:16 ‘al-ken ‘al-baḥu^wrō^yw lo^t -yiśmah ‘adonōy wə‘et-yətomō^yw wə‘et-‘almənotō^yw lo^t yəraḥem ki^y kullo^w ḥōnep u^wmera^t wəkōl-pe^h dober nəbōlō^h bəkōl-zo^t lo^t -šōb ‘appo^w wə‘o^wd yādo^w nəṭu^wyō^h
- Therefore the Lord did not rejoice in their young men, he did not have mercy on their orphans and widows; for all of them were godless people and evildoers, every mouth was speaking foolishness. For all this his wrath did not retract, **his hand** being still **extended**.
- Isaiah 9:19-20 (19) wayyigzor ‘al-yōmi^yn wəro^t‘eb wayyo^t kal ‘al-śāmo^w‘wī wəlo^t ‘šōbe‘u^w ‘i^yš bəśar-zəro^t‘o^w yo^t kəlu^w (20) mənāšše^h ‘et-‘əprayim wə‘əprayim ‘et-mənāšše^h yaḥdōw hemmō^h ‘al-yəhu^wdō^h bəkōl-zo^t lo^t -šōb ‘appo^w wə‘o^wd yādo^w nəṭu^wyō^h
- (19) They cut on the right but were (still) hungry, they ate on the left but were not satisfied. Each man was eating the flesh of his own arm. (20) Manasseh (was eating) Ephraim, and Ephraim (was eating) Manasseh. Together they were against Judah. For all this his wrath did not retract, **his hand** being still **extended**.
- Isaiah 10:4 bilti^y kōra^t taḥat ‘assi^yr wətaḥat h^aru^wgi^ym yippolu^w bəkōl-zo^t lo^t -šōb ‘appo^w wə‘o^wd yādo^w nəṭu^wyō^h
- Without me he bowed down under the captives, he fell under the slain.⁹⁰ For all this his wrath did not retract, **his hand** being still **extended**.

Instrument held in the hand, when preceded by the preposition *bə*, is viewed grammatically as the instrument of the action, while the hand is viewed as the direct object of the verb (see the comments on the similar idiom *heri^ym yōd* above). Note that these translators render the full form of the phrase in Exodus 8:1, 13 correctly as “extend the hand with the staff” or similar.

⁹⁰ This first bicolon is very difficult to interpret; it may be textually corrupt. See Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 208, 210, especially 210, note c. The translation adopted here is as old as KJV and seems to us to do the least violence to the syntax and semantics of the passage. Other translators (NIV, NRSV, NJB; also Blenkinsopp, *ibid.*) take *bilti^y* as an existential particle, and some treat this bicolon as subordinate to the previous verse; however, these do not seem to reckon with the syntax of the passage nor with the meanings of the words in this verse as they stand. A detailed

- Isaiah 14:26-27 (2x) (26) zo't hō' ešō^h hayyō' u^wšō^h 'al-kōl-hō' ʾereš wəzo't **hayyōd hannətu^wyō^h** 'al-kōl-haggo^wyim (27) ki^y-YHWH šəbo' o^wt yō' ʾəš u^wmi^y yōper wəyōdo^w hannətu^wyō^h u^wmi^y yəšiybenno^h
- (26) This is the counsel that is determined for the whole land; this is **the hand that is extended against all the nations**. (27) For Yahweh Sabaoth has determined (it); who will frustrate (it)? As for **his extended hand**, who will make it retract?
- Isaiah 23:11 **yōdo^w nəṭō^h** 'al-hayyōm hirgi^yz mamlōko^wt YHWH šiwwō^h 'el-kəna'an lašmid mō'uzne^yhō
- He extended his hand against the sea** and made kingdoms quake. Yahweh gave a commandment concerning Canaan to destroy its fortresses.
- Jeremiah 21:5 wənilhanti^y 'ani^y 'ittākem bəyōd nətu^wyō^h u^wbizro^{wa} 'ḥ^azōqō^h u^wbə'ap u^wbəhemō^h u^wbəqəšəp gōdo^wl
- I myself will fight against you **with an extended hand**, a strong arm, anger, fury, and great wrath.
- Jeremiah 51:25 hinəni^y 'eləyko har hammašhi^yt nə'um-YHWH hammašhi^yt 'et-kōl-hō' ʾereš wənəṭi^yti^y 'et-yōdi^y 'əle^yko wəgilgalti^yko min-hassəlo' i^ym u^wnətatti^yko ləhar šərepō^h
- Behold, I am against you, O mountain of ruin, says the Lord, that ruins the whole land. **I will extend my hand against you**, roll you down from the rocks, and make you a mountain of burning.
- Ezekiel 6:14 wənəṭi^yti^y 'et-yōdi^y 'ale^yhem wənətatti^y 'et-hō' ʾereš šəmōmō^h u^wməšammō^h mimmidbar diblōtō^h bəkol mo^wšəbo^wte^yhem wəyōdō' u^w ki^y- 'ani^y YHWH
- I will extend my hand against them** and make the land a desolation and a wasteland from the desert to Diblah, throughout all their dwelling-places. Then they will know that I am Yahweh.
- Ezekiel 14:9 wəhannōbi^y ki^y-yəputte^h wədibber dōbōr 'ani^y YHWH pitte^yti^y 'et hannōbi^y hahu^w wənəṭi^yti^y 'et-yōdi^y 'əle^yw wəhišmadi^yw mitto^wk 'ammi^y yiśro'el
- As for the prophet who is deceived and speaks a message, I, Yahweh, have deceived that prophet. **I will extend my hand against him** and destroy him from among my people Israel.
- Ezekiel 14:13 bən-'ōdōm 'ereš ki^y təḥ'əṭō' -li^y lim'ōl-ma'al wənəṭi^yti^y yōdi^y 'əle^yhō wəšōbarti^y lōh maṭṭe^h-lōḥem wəhišlaḥti^y-bōh rō'ōb wəhikratti^y mimmennō^h 'ōdōm u^wbəhemō^h
- Son of man, as for a land that sins against me by acting unfaithfully, **I will extend my hand against it**, break its staff of bread, send a famine against it, and cut off from it both human and beast.

discussion of this issue is not undertaken here, as the general picture of terror and carnage is abundantly clear from the context at large.

- Ezekiel 16:27 wəhinne^h nəṭi^yti^y yədi^y ‘ɔlayik wə’əgra ‘ḥuqqek wə’ettənek bənəpeš
 šonə’o^wṭayik bəno^wt pəlišti^ym hanniklomo^wt middarkek zimmə^h
 Behold, **I have extended my hand against you**, diminished your rations,
 and put you at the will of those who hate you, the daughters of the Philistines
 who are scandalized by your wicked conduct.
- Ezekiel 25:7 ləken hinəni^y nəṭi^yti^y ‘ət-yədi^y ‘ɔlə^yko u^wnətatti^yko-ləbaz laggo^wyim
 wəhikratti^yko min-hə’ammī^ym wəha’abatti^yko min-hə’arəšo^wt ‘ašmi^ydəko
 wəyoda‘tə ki^y-’ani^y YHWH
 Therefore, behold, **I have extended my hand against you**, and I will make
 you a spoil for the nations, cut you off from the peoples, and annihilate you
 from the lands. I will destroy you! Then you will know that I am Yahweh.
- Ezekiel 25:13 ləken ko^h ‘omar ‘adonəy YHWH wənəṭi^yti^y yədi^y ‘al-’do^wm wəhikratti^y
 mimmənno^h ‘odəm u^wbəhemə^h u^wnətatti^yhə ḥərbo^h mitte^ymən u^wdədəne^h
 baḥereb yippolu^w
 Therefore, thus says the Lord Yahweh: “**I will extend my hand against
 Edom**, cut off from it both human and beast, and make it a desolation. From
 Teman even to Dedan they will fall by the sword.”
- Ezekiel 25:16 ləken ko^h ‘omar ‘adonəy YHWH hinəni^y no^wṭə^h yədi^y ‘al-pəlišti^ym
 wəhikratti^y ‘ət-kəreti^ym wəha’abatti^y ‘ət-šə’eri^yt ḥo^wp hayyom
 Therefore, thus says the Lord Yahweh: “Behold, **I extend my hand against
 the Philistines**, and I will cut off the Kerethites and annihilate the remainder
 on the seacoast.”
- Ezekiel 30:25 wəyoda‘u^w ki^y-’ani^y YHWH bətitti^y ḥarbi^y bəyəd melek-bəbel wənəṭi^yti^y ‘o^wtəh
 ‘əl-’ereš mišrəyim
 They will know that I am Yahweh when I put my sword in the **hand** of the
 king of Babylon **and he extends it against**⁹¹ **the land of Egypt**.⁹²
- Ezekiel 35:3 wə’omartə llo^w ko^h ‘omar ‘adonəy YHWH hinəni^y ‘elə^yko har-še’i^r
 wənəṭi^yti^y yədi^y ‘ɔlə^yko u^wnətatti^yko šəməmə^h u^wməšammə^h
 You shall say to him, “Thus says the Lord Yahweh: ‘Behold, I am against
 you, Mount Seir. **I will extend my hand against you** and make you a
 desolation and a wasteland.’”
- Zephaniah 1:4 wənəṭi^yti^y yədi^y ‘al-yəhu^wdə^h wə’al kəl-yo^wšəbe^y yəru^wšəlo(y)im
 wəhikratti^y min-hamməqo^wm hazzə^h ‘ət-šə’or habba‘al ‘ət-šem hakkəməri^ym
 ‘im-hakkoh^ani^ym

⁹¹ As in Joshua 8:18, the preposition ‘əl- occurs in place of ‘al. See BDB, 41.

⁹² In this passage, it is either the hand or the sword (both feminine) that the king of Babylon extends against Egypt. The question of which is correct is not critical to the interpretation of the idiom nor of the gesture itself, since the Instrument sometimes occurs as direct object in place of the Sender in this phrase (cf. Exodus 8:12; 9:23; 10:13) and since both the hand and the sword must be extended simultaneously in any case.

I will extend my hand against Judah and against all the inhabitants of Jerusalem and will cut off from this place the remnant of Baal, the name of the idolatrous priests along with the (other) priests.

Zephaniah 2:13 wayyeṭ yado^w ‘al-ṣəpo^wn wi^y’ abbed ‘et-’ aššu^wr wəyosəm ‘et-ni^ynəwe^h lišmōmō^h ṣiyyō^h kammidbər

that he might extend his hand against the north, that he might annihilate Assyria, that he might make Nineveh a waste, dry like the desert.⁹³

1 Chronicles 21:16 wayyiššo’ dōwi^yd ‘et-’ e^ynə^yw wayyar’ ‘et-mal’ ak YHWH ‘omed be^yn hō’ərəṣ u^wbe^yn haššōmayim wəḥarbo^w šəlu^wpō^h bəyado^w nəṭu^wyō^h ‘al-yəru^wšəla(y)im wayyipol dōwi^yd wəhazzəqeni^ym məkussi^ym baśsaqqi^ym ‘al-pəne^yhem

David lifted up his eyes and saw the angel of Yahweh standing between the earth and the sky with a drawn sword in his **hand, extended against Jerusalem**.⁹⁴ Then David and the elders fell down on their faces, covered in sackcloth.

A number of these passages go together as parts of a larger pericope in which extending the hand plays an important role. In Exodus 7-14, the pattern of God commanding Moses and/or Aaron to perform this gesture, followed by the performance of the gesture and the narration of its result, forms the skeleton upon which the narrative of the plagues in Egypt is constructed. The final scene in chapter 14, in which Moses parts the sea and then causes it to return using this gesture, is the culmination of this pericope. In Isaiah 2-14, the oracles concerning Judah and Babylon, the idiom *nəṭə^h yod* is a leitmotif, occurring eight times. In particular, the bicolon “for all this his wrath did not retract, his hand being still extended” is a sort of refrain in these

⁹³ The verb forms in this verse, at least as vocalized, appear to be jussive forms with the conjunction *wə*. However, there is no verb in the immediately preceding context to which these verbs might be subordinate. Verse 12 may be corrupt in view of the fact that there is an abrupt shift from addressing the Kushites in the second person to referring to them in the third person; K. Elliger, the editor for this portion of *BHS*, suggests that some words may have dropped from this verse (see *BHS*, 1057). The verbs in verse 13 could also be revocalized as Waw Consecutive forms, which are common in prophetic literature (cf. the passages from Isaiah 9:10-11, 19-20 cited above). Given the possibility of textual corruption in verse 12, we have elected simply to translate the forms as they appear in verse 13.

⁹⁴ Similarly to Ezekiel 30:25, there is some ambiguity here as to whether it is the hand or the sword that is “extended.” The parallel passage in 2 Samuel 24:16 clearly refers to the hand of the angel and not a sword being stretched out, though a different gesture idiom is used: *wayyišlah yado^w hammal’ək yəru^wšəla(y)im ləšah^atəḥ* “the angel stretched out his hand (toward) Jerusalem to destroy it.”

chapters, occurring five times. Note here the use of the verb *šwb* “retract,” which recalls the idiom *hešib yad* “to retract the hand” used of ceasing a hand gesture (see below). The idiom *nəṭṭah yad* also occurs quite frequently in the book of Ezekiel, and its character as a purposefully repeated motif is clear in chapters 14 and 25. The distance between other occurrences of the idiom in Ezekiel makes it uncertain to what extent the use of the idiom is purposefully employed as a motif in Ezekiel 1-39 as a whole.

As with other phrases in the contextual type of destruction or exertion of supernatural power,⁹⁵ the full gesture phrase *nəṭṭah yad (bəl)* ‘*al*-*T* employs the preposition ‘*al* before the Target. Various translators render this preposition differently in the passages quoted above, most having “upon,” “over,” or “against,” sometimes with inconsistency from one passage to another. For example, several major translations (KJV, NIV, RSV, NRSV, NJB) have “over” in Exodus 7:19 (where a human is ordered to perform the gesture against bodies of water) and “against” in Isaiah 5:25 (where God performs the gesture against his people), but in Exodus 7:5, where God promises to perform the gesture against Egypt, KJV and RSV render the preposition as “upon,” while NIV, NRSV, and NJB render it as “against.” BDB interprets the preposition as “‘*al* of direction” in cases where Moses performs the gesture but as having the “idea of *against*, i.e. in judgment” in cases where God performs the gesture.⁹⁶ A survey of Targets following ‘*al* in Exodus 7-14 (the pericope of the deliverance from Egypt) shows a great variety in location relative to the Agent, including both upward and downward:

⁹⁵ Cf. *hiṭṭah yad* “extend the hand,” *heniṣp yad ‘al T_{add}* “elevate the hand against T_{add},” and *nəśōṣ yad/I ‘al-T_{add}* “lift up the hand/I against T_{add}.”

⁹⁶ BDB, 639-640. Cf. *ibid.*, 757, where the preposition is rendered “up to” in Exodus 9:22 and 10:21, the Target in these instances being the sky.

Table 2. Targets Following the Phrase *nəṭṭə^h yəd 'al* in Exodus 7-14

Reference	Gesture phrase	Translation of Target
Exodus 7:5	biṇṭoti ^y 'et-yədi ^y 'al-miṣrəyim	Egypt
Exodus 7:19	u ^w nəṭṭə ^h -yədəkə 'al-me ^y me ^y miṣrayim 'al nah ^a rotəm 'al-yə'ore ^y hem wə'al-'agme ^y hem wə'al kəl-miqwe ^h me ^y me ^y hem	waters of Egypt: rivers, streams, ponds, all bodies of water
Exodus 8:1	nəṭṭə ^h 'et-yədəkə bəmaṭṭəko 'al-hannəhərot 'al-hay'ori ^y m wə'al-hə'a ^g gammi ^y m	rivers, streams, and ponds
Exodus 8:2	wayyeṭ 'et-yədo ^w 'al me ^y me ^y miṣrəyim	waters of Egypt
Exodus 9:22	nəṭṭə ^h 'et-yədəkə 'al-haššəmayim	sky
Exodus 9:23	wayyeṭ 'et-maṭṭəhu ^w 'al-haššəmayim	sky
Exodus 10:12	nəṭṭə ^h yədəkə 'al-'ereṣ miṣrayim	land of Egypt
Exodus 10:13	wayyeṭ 'et-maṭṭəhu ^w 'al-'ereṣ miṣrayim	land of Egypt
Exodus 10:21	nəṭṭə ^h yədəkə 'al-haššəmayim	sky
Exodus 10:22	wayyeṭ 'et-yədo ^w 'al-haššəməyim	sky
Exodus 14:16	u ^w nəṭṭə ^h 'et-yədəkə 'al-hayyəm	sea
Exodus 14:21	wayyeṭ 'et-yədo ^w 'al-hayyəm	sea
Exodus 14:26	nəṭṭə ^h 'et-yədəkə 'al-hayyəm	sea
Exodus 14:27	wayyeṭ 'et-yədo ^w 'al-hayyəm	sea

It is important to note that the Agent is Moses in all instances except Exodus 7:5, where the Agent is Yahweh; thus the Agent is atop the land and waters but under the sky. Since these examples are all linked to each other as parts of the same pericope, and since the gesture phrase used in each case is essentially the same, it seems best to interpret the preposition consistently. A translation as “upon” or “over” would not make sense in cases where the Target is upward (the sky), and a translation as “up to” would not make sense in cases where the Target is downward or on the same level with the Agent. The translation “against” works in every case, both in

Exodus 7-14 and elsewhere, and the hostile sense of this translation accords well with the context in every case.⁹⁷

Paul Humbert, in a 1962 study, has compared the semantically similar idioms *nəṭṭəḥ yəd* and *šəlah yəd* (see below) and has made an attempt to describe their distinct nuances based on context.⁹⁸ Humbert posits that *nəṭṭəḥ yəd*, when followed by a preposition, should be translated “point the hand” (*pointer la main*).⁹⁹ However, since the deictic aspect of the gesture phrase (the Target) is already communicated by means of adverbials following the verb (when these are present), it is not necessary to interpret the verb itself as having a deictic nuance.¹⁰⁰ Most other translators render *nəṭṭəḥ yəd* similarly to English “stretch out the hand,” German *die Hand ausstrecken*, Latin *manum extendere* and its derivatives in Romance languages, etc.¹⁰¹

Concerning the context of the idiom *nəṭṭəḥ yəd*, Humbert observes that the Agent of the gesture phrase is always either Yahweh or his representative.¹⁰² In addition to his observations in this regard, one notes that in some of the cases where the gesture is performed by God’s human representative, the act is attributed to God himself (cf. Exodus 7:5, 25; 15:12). Humbert has the following to say about the results that follow when the gesture phrase is used:

[L]e contexte manifeste en effet la portée, non seulement surnaturelle, mais funeste du geste, comme le prouvent les actes et les verbes qui le suivent. Ce sont en effet tantôt des *plaies* suscitées par Dieu...tantôt des *châtiments divins*...¹⁰³

Humbert lists among the acts following the gesture phrase the many supernatural plagues and the dividing of the sea in Exodus, the destruction of Ai in Joshua 8, and destructive divine judgments

⁹⁷ See *DCH*, 6:390-91, definition 5b; cf. *BDB*, 757-758, definition 7d.

⁹⁸ Paul Humbert, “Etendre la main,” *VT* 12 (1962): 383-95.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 391, 393. Cf. *ibid.*, 389, *pointer ou brandir la main vers, contre, pour viser, désignant un objet déterminé*.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Ackroyd’s cautions regarding Humbert’s translation of the idiom, *TDOT* 5:425-26.

¹⁰¹ NIV is somewhat erratic in its renderings of this idiom. Cf. “his hand is raised” in Isaiah 5:25 and “lay hands on you” in Jeremiah 15:6, both translating the same idiom *nəṭṭəḥ yəd* in an almost identical context.

¹⁰² Humbert, “Etendre la main,” 390.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 391.

brought upon Israel, Egypt, Babylon, and other foreign nations in prophetic literature. The verbs that are employed in result clauses following the gesture phrase are especially telling:

'ibbed “annihilate” (Zephaniah 2:13)
bəqa “divide” (Exodus 14:16)
gilgel “roll down” (Jeremiah 51:25)
gəra “diminish” (Ezekiel 16:27)
hikkə^h “smite” (Exodus 8:13; Isaiah 5:25)
hikrī^vt “cut off” (Ezekiel 25:13, 16; Zephaniah 1:4)
hə^el^h haspardə^vm “cause frogs to come up” (Exodus 8:1)
hirqī^vz “cause to quake” (Isaiah 23:11)
hišmī^vd “destroy” (Ezekiel 14:9)
nətan ləbaz “make into a spoil” (Ezekiel 25:7)
nətan šəməm^h “make into a desolation” (Ezekiel 6:14; 35:3)
šəbar “break” (Ezekiel 14:13)¹⁰⁴

To these verbs listed by Humbert could be added the following: *hə^ebi^vd* “destroy” (Ezekiel 25:7, 16), *həh^eri^vm* “annihilate” (Joshua 8:26, clearly associated with the gesture idiom though not in a conjoined result clause), *hišlah rə^vəb* “send a famine” (Ezekiel 14:13), *nətan ləhar šərep^h* “make into a mountain of burning” (Jeremiah 51:25), *šəm lišməm^h* “make into a desolation” (Zephaniah 2:13), two additional instances of *hikrī^vt* “cut off” (Ezekiel 14:13; 25:7), and one additional instance of *hišmī^vd* “destroy” (Ezekiel 25:7).

Humbert’s study considerably advances our knowledge of the contextual type in which this idiom occurs. In all of the examples cited thus far, the Agent of the gesture is Yahweh or his representative, and the gesture phrase is accompanied by descriptions of supernatural, destructive results. The main drawback of Humbert’s approach is his insistence on fitting every last instance

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. Humbert also includes in this list *hišhī^vt* “destroy,” which follows the phrase *hiṭṭə^h yəd* “extend the hand” in Jeremiah 15:6. However, this example does not belong, since the verb of the gesture phrase is in the Hiphil and not the Qal stem. This example is cited and discussed above under *hiṭṭə^h yəd*.

of *nəṭṭ^h yəd* into the same contextual type. As Ackroyd has noted, there are two examples of *nəṭṭ^h yəd* that seem to belong to different contextual types.¹⁰⁵

The first of these is found in Proverbs 1:24. Here the idiom occurs without any prepositional or other adverbial phrase, and the contextual type seems to be one of extending a verbal invitation to an implied Target.

Proverbs 1:24 *ya'an qərō'ti^y wattəmō'enu^w nəṭṭi^yti^y yədi^y wə'e^yn maqši^yb*
For I called, but you refused; **I extended my hand**, but none gave heed.

Humbert puts this passage together with the others already listed, where the context is one of destruction or exertion of supernatural power.¹⁰⁶ However, the context here is quite different. The descriptive setting is a poetic monologue of Wisdom rather than a prophecy or narrative of large-scale divine judgments. The gesture phrase here is parallel to the verb *qərō'* “call,” whereas in the other examples listed above, there is no indication of a speech act associated with the gesture. There is no mention of supernatural or destructive results of the gesture in Proverbs 1:24 and the surrounding passage, unlike the other examples listed above. The Agent of the gesture here is the personified Lady Wisdom, not Yahweh or a male representative. Therefore, the gesture phrase in this passage should be classed in a separate contextual type.

The second divergent passage is Job 15:24-25. Here the idiom occurs with the preposition *'el-*, and the context seems to be one of rebellion or haughty display.

¹⁰⁵ Ackroyd, “*yād*,” *TDOT* 5:425-26. For a similar critique of Humbert’s analysis, cf. Keel, *Wirkmächtige Siegeszeichen*, 155-57.

¹⁰⁶ Humbert considers the Agent in this passage, Lady Wisdom, to be a representative of God (Humbert, “*Etendre la main*,” 390). He says about the passage that *il s’agit d’un geste d’avertissement, donc de grave portée* (Ibid., 391). However, there is not much textual warrant for these assertions, which therefore seem doubtful, as Ackroyd, “*yād*,” *TDOT* 5:425-26, notes.

Job 15:24-25 (24) *yəba*^a *tuhu*^w *šar* *u*^w *məšu*^w *qo*^h *titqəpehu*^w *kəmələk* *ʿoti*^y *d* *lakki*^y *do*^w *r* (25) *ki*^y *-nəṭṭo*^h *ʿel-ʿel* *yədo*^w *wə*^ʿ *el-šadday* *yitgabbər*

(24) Distress and anguish overwhelm him like a king prepared for the battle, (25) for **he extended his hand against God** and behaved proudly toward Shadday.

Humbert recognizes that this usage is exceptional among the examples of extending the hand in the context of destruction or exertion of supernatural power. Most obviously, the Agent and the Target of the gesture phrase are reversed: instead of God or his representative performing the gesture against mortals, a mortal performs the gesture against God. According to Humbert, the point of the passage is that the Agent (*rəšə* “the wicked man,” mentioned in verse 20) is usurping God’s gesture, an act of supreme hubris that deserves to be punished.¹⁰⁷ However, this appears to be somewhat of a stretch. None of the contextual indicators usually found in the more frequent category are present here. There is no mention, for example, of supernatural or destructive results arising from the gesture, although destruction is said to come upon the Agent of the gesture. More to the point, this phrase used in this context seems to fit better with other idioms of rebellion against a higher authority (see discussion under *heri*^y *m* *yəd* *bəT* and *šəlah* *yəd* *bəT*).

2.2.16. *nəṭṭo*^h *yəmi*^y *n* “Extend the Right Hand”

The phrase *nəṭṭo*^h *yəmi*^y *n* “extend the right hand,” like the majority of examples of *nəṭṭo*^h *yəd*, occurs in the context of destruction or exertion of supernatural power, as is evident from the conjoined result clause.

Exodus 15:12 ***nəṭṭi*^y *tə* *yəmi*^y *nəkə*** *tiblə*^ʿ *emo*^w *ʿərəš*

¹⁰⁷ Humbert, “Etendre la main,” 390.

You extended your right hand, and the earth swallowed them (i.e. Pharaoh's armies).¹⁰⁸

The Agent here is Yahweh, and the passage has reference to the miracle at the sea recounted in the previous chapter, where the phrase used is *nṯṯ^h yṯd (bəl)* 'al-T "extend the hand (with I) against T" (see above).

2.2.17. *nṯṯ^ṯ yṯd* "Lift Up the Hand"

The idiom *nṯṯ^ṯ yṯd* "lift up the hand" is found in contexts that belong to four distinct types. One of these is the context of destruction or exertion of supernatural power to which several of the idioms discussed in this chapter belong, most notably *nṯṯ^h yṯd*. The full gesture phrase in these contexts is *nṯṯ^ṯ yṯd/I* 'al-T_{add} "lift up the hand/I against T_{add}." In two of the three examples of this type, both in a single passage in Isaiah 10, the direct object of the verb is a staff, and the hand is left unexpressed.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ There is some ambiguity as to the subject of the verb *tiblṯ'emo*"; it is possible to translate this verb as second person masculine singular, thus "you (Yahweh) swallowed them in the earth." This would yield a stricter ABAB parallelism in this verse, each colon having a second person verb and a verb-governed noun (that is, a noun that would be accusative in Semitic languages with overt case marking). The notion of Yahweh swallowing enemies is found elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible: cf. Psalm 21:10; Isaiah 25:8; Lamentations 2:2, 5 (the verb is in the Piel stem in all of these instances). However, the fact that practically every translation, including the Septuagint, takes the verb as third person singular and "earth" as the subject argues that this interpretation is more natural and therefore preferable (cf. Numbers 16:30, 32, 34; 26:10; 11:6; Psalm 106:17, all clear references to the earth swallowing people, with the verb *bṯla* in the Qal stem). Cf. the similar ambiguity in Exodus 14:26-27. In both passages, it appears that the Target of the gesture is a second actor in carrying out the gesture's ultimate result, rather than the person performing the gesture exerting direct control over the result.

¹⁰⁹ In addition to these three attestations, the War Scroll (1Q33 or 1QM) of the Dead Sea Scrolls contains two very similar idioms in the same kind of context, one with a finite verb in the Niphal stem and another with a verbal noun: [...] *wbh[n]š' yd 'l hgdwlh 'l bly'l w 'l kwl* [...] *l mmšltw bmgpt 'wlmym / [...] wtrw't qdwšym brdp 'šwr wnpłw bny ypt l'yn qwm wktwym yktw l'yn / [...] mš't yd 'l yšr'l 'l kwł hmwn bly'l* "[...] **when the great hand of God shall be li[f]ted up against Belial** and against all the [...] of his dominion with an eternal slaughter / [...] and the shout of the sanctified ones when they pursue Assyria. The sons of Japheth will fall never to rise again, and the Kittim will be crushed without / [...] **the lifting up of the God of Israel's hand against the whole multitude of Belial.**" (1QM 18:1-3.)

Isaiah 10:24-26
(2x)

(24) lōken kō^h-’ōmar ’a^adonay YHWH šəbō’o^wt ’al-ti^yrō’ ’ammi^y yošeb
šiyyo^wn me’ aššu^wr baššebet yakkekko^h u^wmaṭṭehu^w yiššo’ - ’ōl^e’kō bəderek
mišrōyim (25) ki^y-’o^wd mē’at miz’or wəkōlō^h za’am wə’appi^y ’al-tabli^ytōm
(26) wə’o^wrer ’ōlō^yw YHWH šəbō’o^wt šo^wṭ kəmakkat midyōn bəšu^wr ’o^wreb
u^wmaṭṭehu^w ’al-hayyōm u^wnəšo’o^w bəderek mišrōyim

(24) Therefore, thus says the Lord Yahweh Sabaoth: “Do not fear, my people who dwell in Zion, because of Assyria. He will smite you with a rod **and will lift up his staff against you** in the manner of Egypt.¹¹⁰ (25) For in a very short while, my wrath will come to an end, my anger will be (directed) to their destruction.” (26) Yahweh Sabaoth will brandish a whip against him as when he smote Midian at the rock of Oreb, and his staff (he will brandish) against the sea; **he will lift it up** in the manner of Egypt.¹¹¹

Psalms 10:12

qu^wmō^h YHWH ’el nəšo’ yōdēkō ’al-tiškaḥ ’a^anōwi^ym¹¹²

Arise, Yahweh, God! **Lift up your hand**, do not forget the afflicted!

The fact that the hand is unexpressed in the two interconnected verses from Isaiah 10 poses a problem for the analysis of this gesture phrase, though not a major one. Indeed, it should be noted that the hand, whether expressed or not, must obviously be present in the gesture itself (as distinct from the gesture idiom), since the hand must be lifted together with the staff. Two other idioms that occur in the context of destruction or exertion of supernatural power, *heri^ym yōd* and *nōṭ^h yōd*, occasionally omit explicit mention of the hand when there is an Instrument constituent. In these other idioms, the Instrument is sometimes cast as object of the preposition *bə* instead of as the direct object of the verb (see discussions under those idioms), but the simpler

¹¹⁰ For the translation of *bəderek* here as “in the manner of,” see BDB, 203, definition 4.c., also KJV, NIV, and NRSV. The Septuagint and NJB maintain the usual translation of *derek* as “way, road”; the latter translates “on the way from Egypt,” which is possible, though *derek GN* usually means “the way to GN” (BDB, 202, definition 1.d.). The same observations apply to verse 26.

¹¹¹ Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 256-57, suggests that *’al-hayyōm* “against the sea” “has been inserted rather incongruously by a pious glossator for whom mention of the Egyptians brought to mind Exod 14:16, Moses extending his staff over the Red Sea to save the Israelites and destroy the Egyptians.” The connection with Exodus 14:16 is well observed, but I find no reason to posit the existence of a “pious glossator” to explain this phrase. It could be that the incongruity Blenkinsopp perceives comes from rendering *bəderek mišrōyim* as “as the Egyptians did.” However, this is not necessarily an accurate rendering. In BDB, 203, definition 4.c., the expression is explained to mean “as was done in Egypt”; thus Egypt would be the place of the action whose manner is copied, not its subject.

¹¹² The reading of the Kethibh (the consonantal text) is *’nyym* “poor” (with the letter Yod instead of the similar-looking Waw); the reading represented here, which seems to fit better with the context and is followed by all major translations, is that of the Qere (the traditional vocalized text).

structure with the Instrument as direct object also occurs (cf. Exodus 14:16 for *heriʿm yad* and Exodus 8:12; 9:23; 10:13 for *nətʿh yad*). In contrast with these other idioms, *nəsʿ yad* is attested only within a simple phrase structure: verb, one direct object representing either the Sender or the Instrument, and a single optional prepositional phrase representing the Target.¹¹³

Telltale elements of the context in the two Isaiah passages include the verb *hikkʿh* “smite” and the apparent allusion to the use of the gesture of destruction or exertion of supernatural power in the exodus from Egypt. In these passages, it is important for the recognition of this contextual type to point out that personified Assyria, the Agent of the gesture in verse 24, is viewed as an instrument in Yahweh’s hands that he uses to punish Israel, as is evident from the earlier part of this chapter (see, in particular, verses 5-6 and 15-16).¹¹⁴ This passage, therefore, fits with other examples of this contextual type in that the Agent of the gesture is either God himself or his representative.

In Psalm 10, the Agent of the gesture is again Yahweh. The context clearly refers to the destruction of the wicked people who afflict the Psalmist (cf. “break the arm of the wicked and evil one,” v. 15; “the nations perish from his land,” v. 16), and the gesture in verse 12 marks a transition from the Psalmist’s complaints to his exulting because of Yahweh’s action in his behalf and because of the terrible fate of those people. Therefore, even though the gesture phrase in verse 12 does not have an explicit Target, the contextual type of the gesture phrase here is evident.

¹¹³ The prepositional phrase *bəderek mišrəyim* “in the manner of Egypt,” present in the two passages from Isaiah 10, is not counted. The manner and location of a gesture seem to be perceived as less integral than the Target of the gesture, based on the frequency of these constituents and their relative distance from the verb.

¹¹⁴ Verse 6 specifically mentions a commandment given by Yahweh to Assyria to destroy Israel. Joseph Blenkinsopp, in *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, ed. Michael D. Coogan (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), Hebrew Bible, 992, summarizes verses 5-19 as follows: “A poem in the form of a woe-saying about Assyria as the instrument of punishment inflicted by the God of Israel on his own people. Assyria goes beyond its commission and will be punished in its turn.”

The second contextual type in which the idiom *נָסָוּ יָד* occurs is that of rebellion against a king. There are two examples, both in the latter part of 2 Samuel. The full gesture phrase is *נָסָוּ יָד בַּת* “lift up the hand against T.”

2 Samuel 18:28 wayyiqrō ‘aḥi^yma‘aš wayyo‘mer ‘el-hammēlek šlo^wm wayyištaḥu^w lammēlek lə‘appō^yw ‘oršō^h wayyo‘mer bōru^wk YHWH ‘elohe^ykō ‘āšer siggar ‘et-hō‘anošiy^m ‘āšer-**נָסָוּ** **u^w** ‘**et-yōdōm** **ba‘doni^y** **hammēlek**

Ahimaaz called out and said to the king, “(It is) well!” Then he prostrated to the king, with his face to the ground, and said, “Blessed be Yahweh your God, who has delivered up the men who **lifted up their hand against my lord the king!**”

2 Samuel 20:21 lo‘-ken haddōbōr ki^y ‘i^yš mehar ‘eprayim šeba‘ ben-bikri^y šəmo^w **נָסָוּ** **yōdo^w** **bammēlek** bədōwid tēnu^w-‘oto^w ləbaddo^w wə‘eləkō^h me‘al hō‘i^yr watto‘mer hō‘iššō^h ‘el-yo^w‘ōb hinne^h ro‘šo^w mušlōk ‘ele^ykō bə‘ad haḥo^wmō^h

Such is not the case, for a man from the hill country of Ephraim, his name being Sheba son of Bikri, **has lifted up his hand against the king**, against David. Surrender him alone, and I will go away from the city.

The context in both instances makes it clear that the Agent of the (perhaps figurative) uplifted hand gesture is a rebel. In 2 Samuel 18:28, the reference is to Absalom, the son of king David who rebels against him. Sheba son of Bikri in 2 Samuel 20:21 is a man who attempts to lead the northern tribes of Israel in rebellion against king David. Though this contextual type is similar to that of destruction or exertion of supernatural power in that it is violent, it is important to note that the two contextual types are distinct in a number of ways. First, the subject in this contextual type in both cases is a rebel, not a deity or representative of a deity. Second, no supernatural effect of the gesture can be detected. In fact, in both examples of this type, the one who “lifts up his hand” is finally killed. Third, on the level of the gesture clause, the preposition preceding the Target is *bə*, not *‘al* as in the context of destruction or exertion of supernatural power.

Though the preposition used before the Target (*‘al* vs. *bə*) helps to distinguish between contextual types in the Hebrew examples of *נָסָוּ יָד* that have been cited, with *‘al* being used

where the context is that of destruction or exertion of supernatural power, there is one example of this idiom in an Aramaic text where the preposition before the Target is 'al and the context has been interpreted as one of rebellion. Based on Hebrew, the preposition *bə* would have been expected in this context. However, the text in which this example occurs, an Aramaic text written in Demotic script on Papyrus Amherst 63, is far from perfectly understood, and the passage itself is full of lacunae (due to missing or poorly preserved parts of the papyrus) and philological difficulties.¹¹⁵ In the original publication of this portion of the text in 1985, Steiner and Nims transliterated, normalized, and translated the line in question without comment as follows:

pAmherst 63 xxii y'th' . nsw 'r.y ' 'yr'h' . t'ny
3

ydh nś(')w-ly '(l)-(')lh(y) (')dny

He rebelled against me (lit., **his hand he' raised against me**), against my god, my lord/Adonay.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ The recognition that the language behind the Demotic script of this papyrus is Aramaic is credited to Raymond A. Bowman, "An Aramaic Religious Text in Demotic Script," *JNES* 3 (1944): 219-31. As yet, this very interesting text still awaits a complete publication and explicit analysis. The portions that have been published so far are the following: vi 1-18 in Richard C. Steiner and Charles F. Nims, "You Can't Offer Your Sacrifice and Eat It Too: A Polemical Poem from the Aramaic Text in Demotic Script," *JNES* 43/2 (1984): 89-114; Sven P. Vleeming and Jan W. Wesseliuss, "Betel the Saviour: Papyrus Amherst 63, col. 7:1-18," *Ex Oriente Lux* 28 (1983-1984): 110-40; ix 9 through xii 17 in Sven P. Vleeming and Jan W. Wesseliuss, *Studies in Papyrus Amherst 63: Essays on the Aramaic Texts in Aramaic/Demotic Papyrus Amherst 63*, 2 vols. (Amsterdam: Juda Palache Instituut, 1985-1990); xi 11-19 in Charles F. Nims and Richard C. Steiner, "A Paganized Version of Psalm 20:2-6 from the Aramaic Text in Demotic Script," *JAOS* 103 (January-March 1983): 261-74; xvii 1 through xxii 9 in Richard C. Steiner and Charles F. Nims, "Ashurbanipal and Shamash-shum-ukin: A Tale of Two Brothers from the Aramaic Text in Demotic Script," *RB* 92/1 (1985): 60-81. (Note that Vleeming and Wesseliuss renumber columns 4A and 4B as 4 and 5, so every column after 4 is one greater than the corresponding column number in the publications of Steiner and Nims. The present study follows the numbering of Steiner and Nims.) In addition, a full translation of the text by Richard C. Steiner, though without any commentary whatsoever, is found in *COS*, 1:309-27.

¹¹⁶ Steiner and Nims, "Ashurbanipal and Shamash-shum-ukin," 80. We have taken the liberty of modifying the complex and idiosyncratic transliteration system used by Steiner and Nims in order to make it more accessible to those who are not specialists in Papyrus Amherst 63. Specifically, we have replaced the superscript letters used for the "determinatives," whose function as determinatives is very limited and which function generally as word dividers (as noted by Bowman, Steiner, Nims, Vleeming, and Wesseliuss in the works cited above), with periods (.). Instead of the periods used by Steiner and Nims to represent the ubiquitous Aleph signs (which function to represent both consonantal Aleph and certain vowels), we use the sign normally used to transliterate Aleph in Semitic studies ('). Finally, we have eliminated the supralinear lines used to mark consonant combinations that are represented in the text by single signs. For the consonant correspondences <t> = /d/, <s> = /š/, and <r> = /l/, which are well established and attributable to the peculiar nature of the Demotic script, see the works cited above.

Vleeming and Wesselius, in a 1985 study immediately following that of Steiner and Nims, translated the line in question, again without comment, as “He raised his hand towards [the...of] her [ar]my...”¹¹⁷ Subsequently, in 2003, Steiner translated this passage, once again without comment, as “They rebelled against me (lit., their hand they lifted up against me), the one who nourished him...”¹¹⁸ For the purposes of the present study, the problems with this text include the apparent discord in number between *y'th* “his hand” (with a third person masculine singular pronoun suffix) and *nsw* “they raised”¹¹⁹ and, of course, the very fragmentary and equivocal nature of the surrounding context. According to the interpretation of Vleeming and Wesselius, the context could be taken as that of destruction or exertion of supernatural power, lifting up the hand “towards” or against (*l*) an army. Unfortunately, we lack attestations of this idiom in other Aramaic texts of this period (for the idiom *nś' ydyn* “lift up the hands (pl.)” in Aramaic, including another example from Papyrus Amherst 63, see below). In view of these considerations, this instance of “lift up the hand” can be considered no more than an interesting, but poorly understood, example of the idiom.

The third contextual type in which the idiom *nśś' ycd* is that of an oath. There are fifteen occurrences, most of which are in Ezekiel. Twelve of these occurrences involve Yahweh’s oath to bring (or, in three passages, not to bring) Israel into the promised land (Exodus 6:8; Numbers 14:30; Ezekiel 20:5-6 [3x], 15, 23, 28, 42; 47:14; Psalm 106:26; Nehemiah 9:15). In these twelve occurrences, the full gesture phrase is *nśś' ycd ləT_{add} ləP_{obl}* “lift up the hand to T_{add} to P_{obl}.” In two of the remaining occurrences, constituents added to the full gesture phrase are *’el-T_{dir}* “to

¹¹⁷ Vleeming and Wesselius, *Studies in Papyrus Amherst 63*, 1:37.

¹¹⁸ Steiner in *COS*, 1:327. Steiner apparently treats *yth* as if it read *yth(n)*; see the entries for *yd* and *nsy* in Richard C. Steiner and Adina Mosak Moshavi, “A Selective Glossary of Northwest Semitic Texts in Egyptian Script,” in *DNWSI*, 2:1257, 1261.

¹¹⁹ The interpretation of *nsw* as a writing of Aramaic *nś'w* “they raised” (with Demotic *s* for Aramaic *ś* and elision of the glottal stop) is reasonably well established from other examples in this papyrus. See Steiner and Moshavi in *DNWSI*, 2:1257, 1261.

T_{dir}” (Deuteronomy 32:40) and ‘*al-T_{ref}*’ “concerning T_{ref}” (Ezekiel 44:12). Finally, in Ezekiel 36:7, the basic gesture phrase occurs without additional constituents.

Exodus 6:8 wəhebe[’]ti^y ’etkəm ’el-hə[’]ərəš[’] ’ašer nəsə[’]ti^y ’et-yədi^y lətet[’] ’otəh lə[’]abrəhəm ləyišəq u^wləya[’] aqob wənətatti^y ’otəh ləkəm mo^wrəšə^h ’ani^y YHWH
I will bring you into the land which **I lifted up my hand to give**¹²⁰ **to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob**. I will give it to you as an inheritance. I am Yahweh.

Numbers 14:30 ’im-’attəm təbo[’]u^w ’el-hə[’]ərəš[’] ’ašer nəsə[’]ti^y ’et-yədi^y ləšakken[’] ’etkəm bəh ki^y ’im-kələb bən-yəpunne^h wi^yho^wšū^a bin-nu^wn
If you enter the land which **I lifted up my hand to settle you in**, except for Caleb son of Jephunneh and Joshua son of Nun, ...!

Deuteronomy 32:40-41 (40) ki^y-’əššə[’] ’el-šəmayim yədi^y wə’əmarti^y hay[’] ’onoki^y lə’oləm (41) ’im-šanno^wti^y bəraq ḥarbi^y wəto[’]ḥez bəmišpəṭ yədi^y ’əši^yb nəqəm ləšəṛəy wəlimśan[’]ay[’] ašallem
(40) For **I lift up my hand to the sky** and say, “By my life forever, (41) if I whet my flashing sword, and my hand takes hold of judgment, I will bring down vengeance on my adversaries, with those who hate me I will get even.”¹²¹

Ezekiel 20:5-6 (3x) (5) wə’əmartə[’] aleyhem ko^h-’əmar[’] a[’]donəy YHWH bəyo^wm bəḥ[’]ri^y bəyiśrə[’]el wə’əššə[’] yədi^y ləzəra[’] be^yt ya[’] aqob wə’iwwəda[’] ləhem bə’ərəš mišrəyim wə’əššə[’] yədi^y ləhem le[’]mor[’] ’ani^y YHWH ’əlohe^ykəm (6) bayyo^wm hahu^w nəsə[’]ti^y yədi^y ləhem ləho^wšiy[’] əm me[’] ərəš mišrəyim ’el-’ərəš[’] ašer tarti^y ləhem zəbat ḥələb u^wdəbaš šəbi^y hi^y’ ləkəl-hə[’]ərəšo^wt
(5) You shall say to them: “Thus says the Lord Yahweh: ‘In the day that I chose Israel **and lifted up my hand to the seed of the house of Jacob**—that is, when I manifested myself to them in the land of Egypt **and lifted up my hand to them**, saying, “I am Yahweh your God”— (6) in that day **I lifted up my hand to them to bring them out of the land of Egypt to a land** that I had selected for them, flowing with milk and honey; it is the crown jewel of all lands.””

Ezekiel 20:15 wəgam-’ani^y nəsə[’]ti^y yədi^y ləhem bammidbər ləbiliti^y ḥəbi^y’ ’o^wtəm ’el-hə[’]ərəš[’] ašer-nətatti^y zəbat ḥələb u^wdəbaš šəbi^y hi^y’ ləkəl-hə[’]ərəšo^wt
I also **lifted up my hand to them** in the desert **to not bring them into the land** which I had given (them), flowing with milk and honey, it being the crown jewel of all lands.

¹²⁰ Here and below, the translation is literal; it will be shown in the following discussion that the reference is to oath-taking.

¹²¹ For the particulars of translation in this passage, cf. Conklin, *Oath Formulas*, 15.

- Ezekiel 20:23 gam-^ʿni^y **נָסַוּ תִי** ^ʿet-yōdi^y **לְהֵם** bammidbār **לְהַפִּיֵּץ** ^ʿotām baggo^wyim u^wləzōro^wt ^ʿo^wtām bō^ʿaršō^wt
- I also **lifted up my hand to them** in the wilderness **to disperse them among the nations** and to scatter them among the lands.
- Ezekiel 20:28 wō^ʿbi^yem ^ʿel-hō^ʿarēš ^ʿašer **נָסַוּ תִי** ^ʿet-yōdi^y **לְתֵת** ^ʿo^wtāh **לְהֵם** wayyir^ʿu^w kōl-gib^ʿ ^hrōmō^h wəkōl-^ʿeš ^ʿobot wayyizbēhu^w-šōm ^ʿet-zibhē^yhem wayyittēnu^w-šōm ka^ʿas qōrbōnōm wayyōsī^ymu^w šōm re^yāh ni^yhō^whē^yhem wayyassi^yku^w šōm ^ʿet-niske^yhem
- I brought them into the land which **I had lifted up my hand to give to them**. They saw every high hill and every leafy tree, and there they performed their sacrifices, presented their offensive offerings, offered their soothing odor, and poured out their libations.
- Ezekiel 20:42 wi^yda^ʿtēm ki^y-^ʿni^y YHWH bah^ʿbi^y:i^y ^ʿetkēm ^ʿel-^ʿadmat yiśrō^ʿel ^ʿel-hō^ʿarēš ^ʿašer **נָסַוּ תִי** ^ʿet-yōdi^y **לְתֵת** ^ʿo^wtāh **לְאַבֹּתֵיכֶם**
- You will know that I am Yahweh when I bring you into the land of Israel, into the land that **I lifted up my hand to give to your ancestors**.
- Ezekiel 36:7 lōken kō^h ^ʿomar ^ʿadonōy YHWH ^ʿani^y **נָסַוּ תִי** ^ʿet-yōdi^y ^ʿim-lo^ʿ haggero^wyim ^ʿašer lōkēm missōbi^yb hēmō^h kəlimmōtōm yiśšō^ʿu^w
- Therefore thus says the Lord Yahweh: “**I lift up my hand**: If the nations which are around you do not bear their reproach, ...!”¹²²
- Ezekiel 44:12 ya^ʿan ^ʿašer yəšōrētū^w ^ʿo^wtām lipne^y gillu^wle^yhem wəhōyū^w ləbe^yt-yiśrō^ʿel ləmikšō^wl ^ʿowon ^ʿal-ken **נָסַוּ תִי** **יָדִי** ^ʿale^yhem nō^ʿum ^ʿadonōy YHWH wənōsō^ʿu^w ^ʿawonōm
- Because they ministered to them in front of their idols and were an iniquitous stumbling-block to the house of Israel, **I lift up my hand concerning them**, says the Lord Yahweh: They shall bear their iniquity.
- Ezekiel 47:14 u^wnəhāltēm ^ʿo^wtāh ^ʿi^yš kə^ʿōhi^yw ^ʿašer **נָסַוּ תִי** ^ʿet-yōdi^y **לְתִיֵּת** **לְאַבֹּתֵיכֶם** wənōpələ^h hō^ʿarēš hazzo^ʿt lōkēm bənāh^ʿlō^h
- You will inherit, each man equally, that which **I lifted up my hand to give to your ancestors**. This land will fall to you as an inheritance.
- Psalms 106:26-27 (26) wayyiśšō^ʿ **יָדֹוּ** **לְהֵם** **לְהַפִּיֵּץ** ^ʿo^wtām bammidbār (27) u^wləhappi^yl zar^ʿōm baggo^wyim u^wləzōro^wtām bō^ʿaršō^wt
- (26) **He lifted up his hand to them to fell them in the desert**, (27) to make their seed fall among the nations, and to scatter them among the lands.

¹²² Concerning the translation of the verb *נָסַוּ תִי* as an “instantaneous perfective” and the elision of the main clause at the end of the verse, cf. the discussion under Genesis 14:22-23 in section 2.2.7. A more explicit translation of Yahweh’s speech would be, “**I lift up my hand** (in oath as follows): If the nations which are around you do not bear their reproach, (may the unmentionable occur)!”

Nehemiah 9:15 wələḫem miššōmayim nōtatto^h lōhem lir'ōbōm u^wmayim missela' ho^wše'tō
 lōhem lišmō'ōm watto'mer lōhem lōbo^w lōrešet 'et-hō'ōreš 'ašer-nōśō'tō 'et-
yōdākō lōtet lōhem

You gave them bread from the sky for their hunger and made water come out of the rock for them for their thirst. You told them to enter to take possession of the land which **you lifted up your hand to give to them.**

The ten occurrences in Ezekiel constitute a repeated motif in this section of the book, mostly dealing with Israel's inheritance of the promised land. Three occurrences outside of Ezekiel (Exodus 6:8; Numbers 14:30; Nehemiah 9:15) also share the motif of Israel's inheritance of the land. Psalm 106:26, which mentions a promise to fell and scatter Israel in the wilderness, is similar to Ezekiel 20:15, 23.¹²³ In Deuteronomy 32:40-41 and Ezekiel 36:7, the oath context is clearly evident from the use of oath formulae (*ḥay 'ōnoki* "by my life," *'im* "if" followed by a completed or uncompleted conditional clause). The explicit reference to the uplifted hand in the utterance (Ezekiel 36:7; 44:12) has itself been viewed as an oath formula.¹²⁴ In each case, the Agent of the gesture is Yahweh.

The usage of the idiom *nōśō' yōd* compared with that of the verb *nišba'* "swear" also argues for the interpretation of this contextual type as one of oath-taking. While some instances of God recounting his promise to the patriarchs employ the idiom *nōśō' yōd*, others employ the verb *nišba'* instead.¹²⁵ An example of this is found in Deuteronomy 6:10:

Deuteronomy wəḥōyō^h ki^y yəbi^{y'a}kō YHWH 'ēlohē^ykō 'el-hō'ōreš 'ašer **nišba' la'abotē^ykō**
 6:10 **lō'abrōḥām ləyišḥōq u^wlāya'aqob lōtet lōk** 'ōri^ym gədolot wəṭobot 'ašer lo'
 bōni^ytō

¹²³ A similar grouping of examples of this contextual type is found in Thomas Römer, *Israels Väter: Untersuchungen zur Väterthematik im Deuteronomium und in der deuteronomistischen Tradition* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1990), 504-6.

¹²⁴ Conklin, *Oath Formulas*, 14-17.

¹²⁵ Cf. Seely, "Raised Hand of God," 412-13; McGarry, "Ambidextrous Angel," 217-18. Johan Lust, in a 1967 article, also noticed this phenomenon but interpreted it differently; see discussion below.

Yahweh your God will bring you into the land which **he swore to your ancestors, namely to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give you:** large and good cities that you did not build.

The idiom *נָשָׁבַע יָד* in virtual complementary distribution with the verb meaning “to swear” shows that the context in both cases is one of oath-taking.

Several interpreters, both ancient and modern, have recognized that *נָשָׁבַע יָד* in these contexts represents an oath gesture. In the Dead Sea Scrolls manuscript 4QGen-Exod^a, instead of the gesture phrase in Exodus 6:8, there occurs the verb *נָשָׁבַע יָד* [y] “I swore.”¹²⁶ In Targum Neofiti, the word *בְּשִׁבְעָה* “in oath” is added to the gesture phrase in Deuteronomy 32:40 (similarly to Genesis 14:22, where the idiom is *הֲרִימָה יָד* “raise the hand”).¹²⁷ The interpretation as an oath gesture has been accepted in many modern translations and has been explicitly set forth by several scholars.¹²⁸

Other ancient and modern interpreters, however, take a different view regarding *נָשָׁבַע יָד* in the passages listed above. The Septuagint’s translations of *נָשָׁבַע יָד* in these contexts show that for the ancient Greek-speaking translators, in at least some instances, the raising of the hand was not considered a formal oath gesture:

¹²⁶ Eugene Ulrich et al., *Qumran Cave 4, VII: Genesis to Numbers*, DJD 12 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 25. Cf. McGarry, “Ambidextrous Angel,” 217.

¹²⁷ *The Palestinian Targum to the Pentateuch: Codex Vatican (Neofiti 1)* (Jerusalem: Makor, 1970), 2:441, left column, line 15. Cf. Johan Lust, “The Raised Hand of the Lord in Deut 32:40 according to MT, 4QDeut-q, and LXX,” in *Textus: Studies of the Hebrew University Bible Project, Volume XVIII*, ed. Alexander Rofé (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1995), 42 (mistakenly transcribed as *נָשָׁבַע יָד*).

¹²⁸ Cf. the following translations of *נָשָׁבַע יָד* in Exodus 6:8: “I did swear” (KJV), “I swore with uplifted hand” (NIV), “I swore” (RSV, NRSV, NJB). Some French and Italian translations likewise have *j’ai juré* or *giurai* respectively. The German Einheitsübersetzung renders the whole Hebrew phrase *נָשָׁבַע יָד לְעֵת אֲוֹתָהּ* as *ich...unter Eid versprochen habe*. See David G. Burke, “Gesture,” in *ISBE*, 2:451; Viberg, *Symbols of Law*, 19-32; Seely, “Raised Hand of God”; McGarry, “Ambidextrous Angel.”

Table 3. Translations of *נָסַח* ' *yad* in the Septuagint

Reference	Septuagint (Greek)	English translation
Exodus 6:8	exeteina tēn cheira mou	I extended my hand
Numbers 14:30	exeteina tēn cheira mou	I extended my hand
Deuteronomy 32:40	arō... tēn cheira mou	I will lift up...my hand
Ezekiel 20:5 (a)	egnōristhēn T(dat)	I made myself known to T
Ezekiel 20:5 (b)	antelabomēn tē cheiri mou T(gen)	I helped with my hand T
Ezekiel 20:6	antelabomēn tē cheiri mou T(gen)	I helped with my hand T
Ezekiel 20:15	exēra tēn cheira mou epi T(acc)	I lifted up my hand against T
Ezekiel 20:23	exēra tēn cheira mou epi T(acc)	I lifted up my hand against T
Ezekiel 20:28	ēra tēn cheira mou	I lifted up my hand
Ezekiel 20:42	ēra tēn cheira mou	I lifted up my hand
Ezekiel 36:7	arō tēn cheira mou epi T(acc)	I will lift up my hand against T
Ezekiel 44:12	ēra tēn cheira mou epi T(acc)	I lifted up my hand against T
Ezekiel 47:14	ēra tēn cheira mou	I lifted up my hand
Psalms 106:26 (Gr 105:26)	epēren tēn cheira autou T(dat)	he lifted up his hand to T
Nehemiah 9:15	exeteinas tēn cheira sou	you extended your hand

Note: Where the text includes a human Target of the gesture, this is noted in the transliteration of the Greek by the sign T (not distinguishing, for the sake of argument, between Target/Addressee and Target/Referenced) followed by the case: gen = genitive, dat = dative, acc = accusative.

In some of these cases, the Septuagint's rendering may be understood simply as a literalistic translation of the Hebrew (Deuteronomy 32:40; Ezekiel 20:28, 42; 47:14; Psalm 106:26). In three passages (Exodus 6:8; Numbers 14:30; Nehemiah 9:15), the Hebrew verb *נָסַח* "lift up" is rendered in the Greek as *ekteinō* "extend," the verb consistently used elsewhere to translate the Hebrew idiom *נָסַח*^h *yad* "extend the hand" in the context of destruction or exertion of

supernatural power.¹²⁹ In Ezekiel 20:5-6, the Greek rendering suggests two different interpretations for lifting up the hand: the hand is lifted up first to “make known” the Agent (perhaps as a gesture of attracting attention) and then to engage in help-giving activity. In Ezekiel 36:7, the translation of the verb into the future tense rules out the possibility of interpreting the gesture phrase as an oath formula, and instead of a conditional clause following the gesture phrase, there is a prepositional phrase *epi ta ethnē* “against the nations,” making it clear that the gesture is conceived of as a hostile action.¹³⁰ Likewise, in Ezekiel 44:12, the Hebrew *‘ale’hem*, which could be translated either “against them” or “concerning them,” is rendered unambiguously in the Greek as *ep’ autous* “against them.”¹³¹ This hostile use of *epi* plus the accusative case is also used to render the Hebrew preposition *lā* in Ezekiel 20:15, 23.¹³²

The reasons for this apparently divergent interpretive tendency in the Septuagint are not entirely certain. Koenig has suggested that some renditions of gesture phrases in the Septuagint that differ from the Hebrew could be due to Egyptian cultural influence; Koenig refers, in

¹²⁹ *ekteinō tēn cheira* is used to translate Hebrew *נָטַף יָד* in all cases where the context is that of destruction or exertion of supernatural power, except those in Isaiah (see the first set of citations under *נָטַף יָד*).

¹³⁰ For *epi* plus the accusative in the sense of “against,” see LSJ, 623, under *epi*, C.I.4. In the case of Ezekiel 36:7, Lust suggests that the Hebrew originally had the preposition *‘el-* “to” following the basic gesture phrase, thus giving the Septuagint *epi*, and that this was later mistakenly understood as an abbreviation for *‘im-lo’* “if not” and copied thus in the Hebrew. See Johan Lust, “For I Lift Up My Hand to Heaven and Swear: Deut 32:40,” in *Studies in Deuteronomy in Honour of C. J. Labuschagne on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday*, ed. F. García Martínez et al. (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 161. This proposal is innovative, but it lacks textual support.

¹³¹ The *‘ale’hem* does recall the usage in the context of destruction or exertion of supernatural power; cf. Isaiah 10:24, although the fact that the hand is unexpressed there makes the similarity to the idiom in Ezekiel 44:12 less than obvious. However, if the utterance in Ezekiel 44:12 is interpreted as a performative oath rather than a description of a past or future action, it follows that the Target (the third person pronoun in *‘ale’hem*, whose antecedent is the Levites, mentioned in verse 10) is in the semantic role of Target/Referenced. Accordingly, we render the preposition as “concerning” (cf. RSV and NRSV). The oath interpretation for this verse, Ezekiel 44:12, agrees with the majority of commentators. Cf. A. B. Davidson, *The Book of the Prophet Ezekiel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1906), 332; S. Fisch, *Ezekiel* (London: Soncino Press, 1950), 121, 305; Walther Eichrodt, *Ezekiel: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1970), 561; Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 25-48* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 625.

¹³² This Hebrew preposition is rarely used in a hostile sense; see BDB, 510-11, definition 1.d. However, it is also used in the harmless sense of “to” with verbs of vowing, swearing, sacrificing, and other speech and ritual acts, and it is in this category that BDB places the usage here (BDB, 510, definition 1.b.). In the Septuagint, the preposition *lā* in oath contexts is usually rendered by the use of the dative case without a preposition; cf. Genesis 24:9; 25:33; 26:31; 50:24; Exodus 13:5; etc.

particular, to the gesture of extending the arm or hand, which appears as a gesture of exerting magical power in Egyptian art and literature.¹³³ It may be more accurate to judge the interpretive choice in terms of selection from a large repertoire of gestures in the Jewish or Egyptian culture, rather than in terms of divergent cultural views of a single gesture, since it appears that both cultures had the extended-hand gesture of magical power as well as the oath-taking gesture (see further below). Whatever the explanation may be, the Septuagint does not appear to represent the original significance of this gesture any more faithfully than the Dead Sea Scrolls and Targum Neofiti, which understand it as an oath gesture. Indeed, the latter sources harmonize better with the evidence provided by internal comparison and context (see above). Perhaps the best illustration of this is found in the book of Ezekiel, which has a high concentration of both the phrases *נֹתַעַּ הַיָּד* and *נֹסַעַּ הַיָּד*. In the Hebrew text of Ezekiel, as has been shown, the contextual types of both of these phrases are consistently distinct, both as to phraseology and as to other elements of the context:

Table 4: Contextual Comparison of *נֹתַעַּ הַיָּד* and *נֹסַעַּ הַיָּד* in Ezekiel

Basic gesture phrase	Phraseology	Other contextual elements
<i>נֹתַעַּ הַיָּד</i>	<i>ʿal-T_{add}</i>	result clause referring to making desolate, making a spoil, or annihilation
<i>נֹסַעַּ הַיָּד</i>	<i>ləT_{add}</i>	(1) reference to the giving of the land, or (2) speech act with oath formulae

The Sepuagint, however, tends to obscure these distinctions in the rendering of the verb and of the preposition preceding the Target.

¹³³ Yvan Koenig, “Quelques «égyptianismes» de la Septante,” *BIFAO* 98 (1998): 230-32. Cf. Richard H. Wilkinson, *Symbol and Magic in Egyptian Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1994), 195-98, 206-7.

The modern interpreter Johan Lust has also argued for an interpretation of *נָסַבְתָּ יָד* different from that of oath-taking in the above passages.¹³⁴ His arguments are worth considering in detail, since they represent the most thoroughly articulated counter to the prevailing interpretation and since they draw attention to some interesting points regarding the use of *נָסַבְתָּ יָד*. In Lust's view, the main sense of the idiom *נָסַבְתָּ יָד* in all cases is *entrer en action en faveur ou au détriment de quelq'un*.¹³⁵ When a human is the Agent of the gesture phrase (as in 2 Samuel 18:28 and 20:21), the connotation is one of rebellion.¹³⁶ However, for the more numerous instances where God is the Agent, Lust takes as a starting point Psalm 10:12, where, as discussed above, the gesture is clearly one of powerful, hostile action.¹³⁷ The connotation is thus one of exercising divine power.

For those passages involving the giving of the promised land to Israel (Exodus 6:8; Numbers 14:30; Ezekiel 20:5-6, 15, 23, 28, 42; 47:14; Psalm 106:26; Nehemiah 9:15), Lust argues that instead of recounting or taking an oath to bring Israel into the land, give them the land, disperse them among the nations, etc., Yahweh is recounting having acted to accomplish these things. According to Lust, Ezekiel 20, which he describes as a touchstone for this

¹³⁴ Johan Lust, "Ez., XX, 4-26 une parodie de l'histoire religieuse d'Israël," *ETL* 43 (1967): 516-26; Lust, *Traditie, Redactie en Kerygma bij Ezechiël: Een Analyse van Ez., XX, 1-26* (Brussels: Paleis der Academiën, 1969), 147-73; Lust, "For I Lift Up My Hand to Heaven and Swear: Deut 32:40," in *Studies in Deuteronomy in Honour of C. J. Labuschagne on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday*, ed. F. García Martínez et al. (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 155-64; Lust, "The Raised Hand of the Lord in Deut 32:40 according to MT, 4QDeut-q, and LXX," *Textus* 18 (1995): 42-45. Lust's views are followed by Giuseppe Bettenzoli, *Geist der Heiligkeit: Traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung des QDŠ-Begriffes im Buch Ezechiël* (Firenze: Istituto di Linguistica e di Lingue Orientali, 1979), 200-201. Arguments against Lust are given by Römer, *Israels Väter*, 492-93; Viberg, "Symbols of Law," 30; McGarry, "Ambidextrous Angel."

¹³⁵ Lust, "Ez., XX, 4-26," 517; Lust, "For I Lift Up My Hand to Heaven and Swear," 155. Cf. Bettenzoli, *Geist der Heiligkeit*, 201: *sich einsetzen für etwas*.

¹³⁶ Lust appropriately assigns instances of lifting the hands (plural) to different contextual types. Lust, "Ez., XX, 4-26," 522; Lust, "For I Lift Up My Hand to Heaven and Swear," 160-61.

¹³⁷ Lust, "Ez., XX, 4-26," 523. Cf. Lust, "For I Lift Up My Hand to Heaven and Swear," 161.

contextual type, contains a *tableau historique* like the prologues of Near Eastern covenants. Both the favors and the chastisements of the *tableau* use the formula *נָסֹסׁ ׳ ךַּד*.¹³⁸

Lust gives a similar interpretation to Ezekiel 36:7 and 44:12-13, where Yahweh lifts up his hand and says that the Target will bear their reproach (36:7) or their iniquity (44:12-13). In these passages, according to Lust, Yahweh “raises his hand against the enemies of Israel to punish them.”¹³⁹ Likewise, for Deuteronomy 32:40, where Yahweh lifts his hand to heaven, Lust argues that Yahweh raises his hand to punish, the gesture phrase being parallel to “no one saves from my hand” (verse 39) and not to “and say, ‘By my life forever’” (verse 40).¹⁴⁰

Lust presents five main arguments against the interpretation of *נָסֹסׁ ׳ ךַּד* as an oath gesture. We will address each one of these in turn. First, Lust states that pictures and texts from the ancient Near East do not support the idea that the raised hand is an oath gesture. In the art and inscriptions of Mesopotamia and the Levant, raising the hand occurs in various contexts, none of which, Lust argues, can be directly and confidently linked with oath-taking.¹⁴¹ As for inscriptions, Lust cites the example of the Zakkur stela (*KAI 202 A:9-12*), which mentions a

¹³⁸ Lust, “Ez., XX, 4-26,” 524.

¹³⁹ Lust, “Ez., XX, 4-26,” 522-23. Cf. Lust, “For I Lift Up My Hand to Heaven and Swear,” 161.

¹⁴⁰ “Jahvé lève la main non pas en signe de serment, mais en guise de punition” (Lust, “Ez., XX, 4-26,” 523); “[t]he lifting up of the hand to heaven is understood as an act making it impossible to be delivered out of that hand” (Lust, “For I Lift Up My Hand to Heaven and Swear,” 157); “when he holds somebody in his hand and lifts it up to heaven, nobody can reach that far to deliver out of God’s hand” (Lust, “Raised Hand of the Lord,” 41). From these citations, one can discern some evolution in Lust’s view of the passage. In the 1967 article, he seems to view the gesture here similarly to that in Ezekiel 36:7 and 44:12-13. In the later articles, he evidently sees it as an entirely different action in which the Target is held aloft in the deity’s hand. With respect to the parallelism in this passage, Lust relies on the Septuagint, which contains a plus in verse 40 that Lust takes to be parallel to the oath formula: *hoti arō eis ton ouranon tēn cheira mou [+kai omoumai tē dexia mou] kai erō zō egō eis ton aiōna* “for I will lift up to heaven my hand, [+and will swear by my right hand,] and will say, ‘I live forever.’” Whether this plus in the Septuagint is original or represents a later interpretive gloss is in dispute. In either case, the plus most naturally aligns with the gesture mentioned in the previous colon. For discussion, see McGarry, “Ambidextrous Angel,” 220-23. (Consequently, the interpretation of *נָסֹסׁ ׳ ךַּד* as an oath gesture must have been present in this portion of the Septuagint, although the translators’ interpretation elsewhere was different, for which see our analysis above.)

¹⁴¹ Lust does not take into account the stela from Ugarit known as the “Covenant Stela” (Aleppo 4818), which appears to show a raising of hands in the context of a covenant; this stela will be discussed in chapter 4.

gesture of raising the hands in the context of prayer.¹⁴² This argument of Lust's is flawed in two ways. First, one can question the relevance of sources representing the raising of hand(s) in contexts that are quite different from the context of the giving of the promised land in the biblical passages. The data to which Lust refers might be interpreted simply as affirming the existence of different contextual types for raising the hand. In the particular case of the Zakkur stela, the context involves a prayer, not an oath, and both hands are likely raised (the orthography in this case does not make the number of hands explicit, but the idea that both hands are raised is supported by the prayer context and is apparently accepted by Lust himself). Second, Lust neglects some relevant textual and iconographic evidence, particularly from Egyptian sources. Egyptian texts do, in fact, show that raising one hand can be an oath gesture. A boundary stela from the reign of Akhenaten (18th dynasty) introduces a promissory oath with the following formulae:¹⁴³

Urk IV, 1971:2-4 ʿh̄. n β̄. n ḥm=f ʿ=fr pt n ms sw DN ḥr sdd ʿnh̄ it=i DN...

Then his majesty **lifted up his arm to the sky, to the one who gave birth to him, DN**, saying: “As my father DN lives...”

Both here and in Deuteronomy 32:40, the sky is mentioned as a Directional Target, and an authenticator having reference to the life of the deity is used.¹⁴⁴ Also relevant is the stela Panammu I (*KAI 214:29-30*), which attests the raising of both hands in an oath context (see

¹⁴² Lust, “Raised Hand of the Lord,” 43. Cf. Lust, “Ez., XX, 4-26,” 517-19; Lust, “For I Lift Up My Hand to Heaven and Swear,” 160.

¹⁴³ Cf. John A. Wilson, “The Oath in Ancient Egypt,” *JNES* 7 (1948): 141; Brigitte Dominicus, *Gesten und Gebärden in Darstellungen des Alten und Mittleren Reiches* (Heidelberg: Heidelberger Orientverlag, 1993), 95. Dominicus gives an additional example, with *drt* “hand” instead of ʿ “arm,” from the 19th dynasty.

¹⁴⁴ The translation given above, “as X lives,” conforms to the traditional interpretation of the Egyptian ʿnh̄ X; see Wilson, “Oath in Ancient Egypt,” 30. However, the word ʿnh̄ in this construction can also be understood as a noun meaning “life,” and in light of Conklin’s recent study on Semitic oath formulae, particularly Hebrew and Akkadian, one wonders if the proper translation is not “by the life of X.” See Conklin, *Oath Formulas*, 24-30 (on Hebrew *hy X*), 83-85 (on Akkadian *nīš X*).

below).¹⁴⁵ As for iconographic sources, Egyptian scenes commonly show a raising of the hand accompanying a performative bestowal of land, blessings, or offerings between deities and mortals; this may be considered similar to Yahweh performatively bestowing promises and land upon Israel's ancestors. Similar scenes also occur in Levantine art, though, unlike the Egyptian sources, these scenes from the Levant are generally not labeled. These iconographic sources will be discussed in more detail in chapter 4.

Lust's second argument is that we do not find *nšw' yd* used in the same context as *nišba'* "swear" when human oaths are described.¹⁴⁶ However, this is an argument from silence. When it is considered that the alternation between *nšw' yd* and *nišba'* is limited to a single descriptive setting, that of the giving of the promised land, and that most of the examples are concentrated in the book of Ezekiel, it is not very remarkable that there is no variation with respect to the Agent. Further, a reason can be given why the gesture is mentioned when God is the Agent but not when a human is the Agent. The description of God's body movements, which are generally hidden from mortal eyes, has theological significance and therefore deserves mention, while the same is not true for humans.

The third argument is that *nšw' yd* often appears in contexts that are clearly unrelated to oath-taking, for example in Psalm 10:12.¹⁴⁷ In Lust's analysis, all the examples of *nšw' yd* are viewed as having essentially the same function, namely displaying a sign of action, which action can be either beneficent or harmful. This scheme is attractive as a simple way of explaining all the examples of the phrase. However, the scheme does not give due significance to the difference in constituents following the basic gesture phrase. The use of *bə*, *lə*, and *'al* before the Target/Addressee corresponds neatly and consistently to other contextual indicators, so that *nšw'*

¹⁴⁵ Cf. Viberg, *Symbols of Law*, 26.

¹⁴⁶ Lust, "Raised Hand of the Lord," 43. Cf. Lust, "For I Lift Up My Hand to Heaven and Swear," 161.

¹⁴⁷ Lust, "Raised Hand of the Lord," 43.

yʿd ‘*al-Tadd* and *nʿšʿ* ‘*yʿd bəTadd* may be treated as different from *nʿšʿ* ‘*yʿd ləTadd*. The fact that the former two phrases definitely do not involve oath-taking tells us nothing concerning the latter, for which contextual indicators do support the analysis as an oath-taking gesture.¹⁴⁸ In cases like Psalm 10:12, where no additional constituents appear in the gesture phrase, other contextual indicators can be used to determine the contextual type. As discussed above, the gesture phrase in Psalm 10:12 seems to belong in the contextual type that employs the preposition ‘*al* before the Target/Addressee.

For his fourth argument, Lust points out that the Septuagint definitely understands some instances of *nʿšʿ* ‘*yʿd* in the descriptive setting of the giving of the land to refer to something other than oath-taking.¹⁴⁹ This shows that at least one ancient community interpreted the gesture similarly to how Lust prefers to analyze it. However, as we have noted, the Septuagint has no special claim to truth on this point, as other ancient sources definitely see this gesture as one of oath-taking. Internal analysis based on context seems to indicate that the interpretation as an oath gesture, rather than that of the Septuagint, is correct.

Finally, Lust points out that in the cases where *nʿšʿ* ‘*yʿd* appears to substitute for *nišba* ‘, the former occurs only in priestly traditions, while the latter occurs mainly in Deuteronomic traditions. Lust suggests that this is because, in the view of the priestly traditions, it was inappropriate for God to take an oath, since oaths involved calling upon deities as witnesses.¹⁵⁰ The observation concerning the difference in distribution between *nʿšʿ* ‘*yʿd* and *nišba* ‘ is certainly worthy of note, yet the argument Lust derives from this observation seems forced. One can suggest other explanations for the distribution of the two phrases. For example, it may be

¹⁴⁸ Cf. Römer, *Israels Väter*, 493n7.

¹⁴⁹ Lust, “Raised Hand of the Lord,” 43-44. Cf. Lust, “For I Lift Up My Hand to Heaven and Swear,” 163.

¹⁵⁰ Lust, “Raised Hand of the Lord,” 44. Cf. Lust, “Ez., XX, 4-26,” 520-22; “For I Lift Up My Hand to Heaven and Swear,” 162.

understood simply as a matter of style (perhaps tied to regional differences, sociolect, or diachronic development of the language of oath-taking in Hebrew), just as some speakers of English may be more likely to use the expression “I cross my heart,” while others may prefer “I promise.” God repeatedly uses other oath formulae in the book of Ezekiel, which shows that Ezekiel accepted the idea of God taking oaths.¹⁵¹

A recent study by C. A. Strine has followed the basic analysis proposed by Lust.¹⁵² Strine’s study essentially recapitulates Lust’s arguments, except that he adds a new argument: according to Strine, the “*našû-nadānu* formula,” which is used to express the transfer of property in Akkadian texts from Ugarit, is a “semantic equivalent” to the biblical use of *נָסַח׳ יָד* in conjunction with *לָתֵת* “to give.”¹⁵³ Strine understands both expressions not as descriptions of symbolic legal gestures but as frozen verbal formulae. In his understanding, both employ the word for “hand” as a metonymy for power—or, more specifically in this case, ownership of property (the Akkadian formula is typically followed by a clause indicating that nobody will take the transferred property *ištu qāti* “from the hand” of the one to whom it is transferred). The connection between the Akkadian and Hebrew expressions is problematic, for the direct object of the verb *našû* in the *našû-nadānu* formula is the property that is transferred, while the direct object of the verb in the Hebrew expression is the Agent’s hand. Strine diminishes this difference by taking both expressions strictly as metaphors; yet *נָסַח׳ יָד* is most easily understood in its plain sense as a physical action, while the Akkadian expression “lift up land” is not. In the conclusion of his discussion, Strine writes, “Perhaps evidence will come to light in the future that

¹⁵¹ Ezekiel has more instances of the authenticator *ḥay-ʿoni* “by my life” than any other biblical book (sixteen total instances: Ezekiel 5:11; 14:16, 18, 20; 16:48; 17:16, 19; 18:3; 20:3, 31, 33; 33:11, 27; 34:8; 35:6, 11). In each case, the speaker is Yahweh. Also note Ezekiel 16:8, where Yahweh recounts having sworn to (*nišbaʿ lə*) Israel, here personified as a bride. Cf. Römer, *Israels Väter*, 492-93; Seely, “Raised Hand of God,” 413.

¹⁵² C. A. Strine, *Sworn Enemies: The Divine Oath, the Book of Ezekiel, and the Polemics of Exile* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013), 72-97.

¹⁵³ Strine, *Sworn Enemies*, 89-97.

does indicate a raised hand supported oath taking in the ancient Near East. Still, the lack of any corroboration for this custom...increases the burden of proof for this argument.”¹⁵⁴ The Egyptian data discussed above provide clear evidence in this regard and should be sufficient to relieve the “burden of proof” to which Strine refers.

The interpretation as an oath gesture for the above passages, then, remains the most viable option. The interpretive trend represented by the Septuagint, Lust, and Strine has much interest as a diverse approach to these passages, but it appears less viable in terms of the methodology adopted here. It may be noted that these other interpreters’ approach is similar to that which sees *heh^ezi^yq yad* “grasp the hand” as a figurative leading by the hand rather than a covenant-making gesture (see above). Also, the tendency to apply an overarching function to all the examples of a given basic gesture phrase is quite common (cf. Humbert’s analyses of *no^th^h yad* and *šolah yad*, discussed under the respective phrases). In general, we accept such analyses only when they are supported by a close examination of the context, according to the methodology outlined in the introduction to this chapter.

While the oath interpretation for *no^so[’] yad* appears preferable for all the passages listed above, one may still wonder whether we are dealing with two or more distinct contextual types, considering the diversity of adverbial arguments found in these passages. However, there is no mutual exclusivity, from a logical standpoint, among the four kinds of adverbial arguments attested in these examples (*l^aT_{add}*, *l^aP_{obl}*, *’el-T_{dir}*, and *’al-T_{ref}*). Indeed, it is possible to imagine a gesture that has an Addressee, entails an Obligation, involves movement in a Direction that is different from the Addressee (e.g. the hand lifted upward with the palm facing horizontally toward the Addressee), and concerns a distinct third-person Referent at the same time. In contrast, the arguments in these examples compared with those of other contextual types using *no^so[’] yad*

¹⁵⁴ Strine, *Sworn Enemies*, 96.

are mutually exclusive and do contrast with each other. $l\partial T_{add}$ in the third contextual type, for example, contrasts with $'al-T_{add}$ in the first type, $b\partial T_{add}$ in the second type, and $'el-T_{add}$ in the fourth type. The prepositions $'al$ and $'el-$ in the third contextual type, in contradistinction with the first and fourth types, mark T_{ref} and T_{dir} respectively. It is not necessary, therefore, to posit more than one contextual type for the use of $n\partial s\partial' y\partial d$ in oath contexts. The fact that no more than two of the arguments that are diagnostic for this contextual type occur together in any one example does not affect the coherence of this contextual type; it is in keeping with the general paucity of long, complex strings of arguments in Northwest Semitic gesture clauses.¹⁵⁵

The fourth contextual type in which $n\partial s\partial' y\partial d$ is attested consists of one passage in which the idiom is in poetic parallelism with lifting a banner. The full phrase is $n\partial s\partial' y\partial d' el-T_{add}$ “lift up the hand to T_{add} .”

Isaiah 49:22 $ko^h-'\partial mar' adon\partial y YHWH\ hinne^h' \text{éss}\partial' '\text{el-go}^w yim\ y\partial di^y w\partial' el-'\text{ammi}^y m'$
 $'\partial ri^y m\ nissi^y w\partial hebi^y' u^w b\partial nayik\ b\partial \partial \partial \partial en\ u^w b\partial notayik' al-k\partial tep\ tinn\partial \partial \partial e' n\partial^h$
 Thus says the Lord Yahweh: Behold, **I will lift up my hand to the nations;**
 I will raise my standard to the peoples. They will bring your sons on the
 bosom; your daughters will be lifted up on the shoulder.

It is possible that the gesture described here is to be identified either with the gesture of destruction or exertion of supernatural power (as found in the first contextual type) or with the oath gesture (as found in the third contextual type), both of which usually have Yahweh as the Agent of the gesture. Nevertheless, based on the context and on comparison with other gesture

¹⁵⁵ Cf. John W. Du Bois, “The Discourse Basis of Ergativity,” *Language* 63 (1987): 805-55; Du Bois, “Discourse and Grammar,” in *The New Psychology of Language: Cognitive and Functional Approaches to Language Structure*, ed. Michael Tomasello (n.p.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2003), 47-87. It should be noted that Du Bois’s concept of preferred argument structure pertains primarily to spoken discourse, not crafted literary language, and that it is not a hard-and-fast rule but a matter of statistical predominance. Further, Du Bois considers only core arguments, not adverbials. Nevertheless, even though relatively complex formulations such as “extend your hand with the staff against the rivers...” (Exodus 8:1) exist, the presence of more than one kind of Target in a single gesture clause seems to be avoided.

phrases, it appears more appropriate to treat this as a separate gesture, namely as a signal to gather.¹⁵⁶ The contextual type in which the gesture is couched is distinctive; the context does not mention a destructive or supernatural result of the gesture, nor does it describe an oath.

Distinctive aspects of the context here include the parallelism with raising a standard and the result clause with *hebi*' "bring" as an action done by the Target. Both of these contextual elements are also found in Isaiah 13:2 (discussed above), where the idiom is *heni*'p yad "elevate the hand."

2.2.18. *nšw*' yadayim "Lift Up the Hands"

Based on the attestations of this idiom, it appears to be one of the most widespread gesture idioms among ancient Northwest Semitic cultures, another being *šlah* yad "stretch out the hand" (discussed below). *nšw*' yadayim "lift up the hands," when situated in a context that describes or alludes to prayer, is attested twice in Ugaritic, once in an Old Aramaic inscription, and twice in Biblical Hebrew poetry.¹⁵⁷

Kirta, *KTU* 1.14 (ii 21) w 'l . l zr . mgdl . rkb (22) tkmm . hmt . š'a . ydk (23) šmm . dbh . ltr
 ii 21-26, iv 2-8 (24) 'abk . 'il . šrd . b'l (25) b dbhk . bn . dgn (26) bmsdk... (iv 2) w 'ly (3) l
 zr . m[g]dl . rkb (4) tkmm . hmt . nš'a (5) ydh . šmmh . dbh (6) l tr . 'abh .
 'il . šrd (7) b'l . b dbhh . bn dgn (8) b[m]sdh

(ii 21) Ascend to the top of the tower, mount (22) the shoulder of the wall. **Lift up your hands** (23) **to heaven**, sacrifice to the Bull, (24) your father 'Ilu. Bring down Ba'lu (25) with your sacrifice, the son of Dagan (26) with your prey... (iv 2) He ascended (3) to the top of the to[w]er, he mounted (4) the shoulder of the wall. **He lifted up** (5) **his hands to heaven**, he sacrificed (6) to the Bull, his father 'Ilu. He brought down (7) Ba'lu with his sacrifice, the son of Dagan (8) with his [p]rey.

¹⁵⁶ Cf. Lust, "For I Lift Up My Hand to Heaven and Swear," 161; Ackroyd, "yād," in *TDOT* 5:411-12.

¹⁵⁷ The examples in Kirta and Psalms are discussed in Mayer Gruber, *Aspects of Nonverbal Communication in the Ancient Near East* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1980), 32-38. Gruber focuses on the symbolism of the gesture, a matter that will be discussed in chapter 5.

Rites for the
Vintage, *KTU*
1.41 50-55

(50) 'id [. yd]bh . mlk . l . prgl . šqrn . b . gg (51) 'ar[b'] . 'arb' . mṭbt .
'azmr . bh . š . šr[p] (52) 'al[p.] w . š . šlmm . p'amt . šb' . k lbh (53) yr[gm]
mlk . šb'u . špš . w . ḥl . mlk (54) w . [...] . špm . w . mh[...] . ttbn[...] (55) b .
[...] . w . km . 'it y[š'u] šmm . ydh [...]

(50) At that time, the king [shall sac]rifice to PRGL-ŠQRN on the roof, (51) there being fo[ur] dwelling-places of branches on one side and four on the other: a ram as a bur[nt] offering. (52) A bu[ll] and a ram as a *šlmm*-offering, seven times. According to (what is in) his heart (53) the king shall s[peak]. When the sun rises,¹⁵⁸ the king will be free of cultic obligations. (54) [...] ¹⁵⁹ You shall take him back (55) to [the palace].¹⁶⁰ When he is there, **he shall lift up] his hands to heaven.** [...]

Zakkur, *KAI* 202
A:9-12

(9) wšmw . kl mlky' 'l . mšr . 'l . ḥzr[k] (10) whrmw . šr . mn . šr . ḥzrk .
wh'mqw . ḥrš . mn . ḥr[šh] (11) w'š' . ydy . 'l . b'š[my]n . wy'nny
b'šmy[n . wyd-] (12) [br] . b'šmyn . 'ly . [b]yd . ḥzyn . wbyd . 'ddyn

(9) All these kings laid siege to Hadhra[k]. (10) They raised a wall higher than the wall of Hadhrak, they dug a ditch deeper than [its] dit[ch]. (11) **I lifted up my hands to B'el-sh[may]n.** B'el-shmay[n] answered me, B'el-shmayn [sp-] (12) [oke] to me [th]rough seers and through diviners.

Psalm 28:2

šəma' qo^wl taḥ^anu^wnay bəšawwə^{'i}y' 'elə^yko **bənəš'ī^y yəday 'el-dəbi^rr**
qəḏšəkə

Hear my supplicating voice when I cry to you for help, **when I lift up my hands to the cella of your sanctuary!**

Psalm 134:2

hinne^h bər^aku^w 'et-YHWH kəl-'abde^y YHWH ḥə'omədi^ym bəbe^yt-YHWH
balle^ylo^wt / šə' u^w-yədekem qəḏəš u^wbər^aku^w 'et-YHWH

Behold, bless Yahweh, all you servants of Yahweh who stand in the house of Yahweh by night, / **Lift up your hands (to) the sanctuary,** and bless Yahweh!

Specific elements of the context in these passages vary. The passage of the Kirta epic preceding what is cited above describes Kirta's preparations for the prayer on the tower, including washing and rouging himself, washing his hands, and taking a lamb, a kid, a pigeon, wine, and honey to present as an offering. *KTU* 1.41 50-55 is part of a long ritual prescription for offerings and other actions to be carried out during a harvest festival. Both of the Ugaritic texts

¹⁵⁸ On the meaning of *šb'u* here, see Dennis Pardee, *Les textes rituels* (Paris: Éditions Recherche sur les Civilisations, 2000), 1:199-202. This differs from *DULAT*, 2:777 (“setting, ’ said of the sun”).

¹⁵⁹ The first part of line 54 is broken and difficult to make sense of.

¹⁶⁰ Levine, de Tarragon, and Robertson restore “into the temple” here. See *COS*, 1:301.

thus describe praying with uplifted hands as part of a chain of ritual actions that includes the offering of sacrifices. Explicit mention of ritual preparations and of the offering of sacrifices is absent from the other passages quoted; however, Psalm 134:2, at least, is comparable in referring to prayer offered by priests (the “servants of Yahweh”) during their service in the temple precincts, which would have included ritual preparations and sacrifices. In three of the passages (*KTU* 1.14 ii 21-26, iv 2-8; *KAI* 202 A:9-12; Psalm 28:2), the prayer is one of supplication, a cry for help from the deity. In the other two passages, however, it seems that the prayer is part of regular cultic service. The location of the prayer varies: a tower, the palace, an unspecified location (in *KAI* 202 A:9-12), or the temple. What is common to all of these passages, therefore, is simply that the gesture accompanies a prayer to deity.

The phrase in each of these passages includes an adverbial that indicates the location or entity to which the gesture is directed. Among the six occurrences of the phrase, three (*KTU* 1.14 ii 22-23; *KTU* 1.41 55; Psalm 134:2) employ an adverbial accusative or unmarked adverbial, (adv)_{T_{dir}}. In the Aramaic passage *KAI* 202 A:9-12 and in Psalm 28:2, the preposition *ʾl/ʾel-* is employed preceding the Target. Finally, in *KTU* 1.14 iv 5, a noun with the adverbial morpheme *-h* is used. The Target itself also varies, but in all cases it is either a deity or the abode of deity. In the Ugaritic passages, the Target is heaven (*šmm*). In the Aramaic passage, it is the deity Bʿel-shamayn, whose name includes the Aramaic cognate of Ugaritic *šmm*. In the two passages from the Psalms, the terms *dabiʾr qdšek* and *qodeš* are open to interpretation. The word *qodeš* can be rendered abstractly as “apartness, sacredness” (thus some translators render the construct phrase *dabiʾr qdšek* as “your sacred shrine” or similarly), but it can also have specific reference to

God's abode, either in heaven or in the earthly temple.¹⁶¹ Dahood argues that, since the Agents of the gesture phrase in Psalm 134:2 are already standing in the temple (cf. verse 1), the word *qodeš* there has reference to Yahweh's heavenly temple.¹⁶² In any case, the Target of *נָסָוּ* *yodayim* in these two passages is Yahweh's dwelling-place.

In addition, there is an attestation of this idiom in what appears to be a similar context in Papyrus Amherst 63, the Aramaic text in Demotic script. Following the 1990 publication of this text by Vleeming and Wesselius, this passage can be transliterated and translated as follows:

pAmherst 63 ix 17-19 (2x) (17) mry . 'rh . b'ytm' . dyn' . 'rmm' .r't . (18) d' 'ryk' . n'st . y'dyh' . tst'br . bmrp w hyh' . (19) h' . n'st . 'ydyh' . [tst]br bmrp w hyh' .
 (17) Lord, god who judges the orphan, the widow (18) who **raised her hands towards you** will straightway receive good tidings, and will laugh, (19) behold, **she raised her hands** (and) will straightway receive good tidings, and will laugh.¹⁶³

Steiner offered a different translation of this passage, though without comment, in 2003: “Mar, my god – father of the orphan, champion of the widow. She who has lifted up her h[a]nds to you, you calm in her *sobbing*. She has lifted up her hands – [you] ca[lm] her *sob[bin]g*.”¹⁶⁴ Though this passage does not present quite as many problems as xxii 3 from the same text (discussed above), some aspects of the context are problematic. The Agent of the gesture is especially so. Vleeming and Wesselius, followed by Steiner, interpret *'rmm' .r't* as a writing of *'rmlt'* “widow” (emphatic state). This interpretation is supported by the collocation with *ytm'* “orphan” and by

¹⁶¹ BDB, 871. Both BDB and Clines (*DCH* 2:384) regard *qodeš* in Psalm 28:2 as having reference to the temple, contra KJV, NRSV, and Mitchell Dahood, *The Anchor Bible: Psalms I, 1-50* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1965), 171, who translate the word in its abstract sense.

¹⁶² Mitchell Dahood, *The Anchor Bible: Psalms III, 101-150* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1965), 255. For this sense of *qodeš*, cf. BDB, 871, definition 2.a.

¹⁶³ Vleeming and Wesselius, *Studies in Papyrus Amherst 63*, 2:46-51. Again, I have taken the liberty of modifying the transliteration system used by Vleeming and Wesselius, which, though different from that used by Steiner and Nims, is just as arcane. I follow the same conventions here as in the citation from xxii 3 of the same text (see above).

¹⁶⁴ Steiner in *COS*, 1:316.

the fact that the letter sequences between word dividers (*'mmm'* and *r't*) are unintelligible on their own; however, this interpretation requires that the doubled *m* be a dittography and that the word divider (or “determinative”) in the middle of the sequence be a mistake.¹⁶⁵ Other aspects of the context also present interpretive difficulties, particularly the interpretation of the words *tst'br*, *mrp*, and *hyh'*.¹⁶⁶ As for the gesture phrase itself, based on other attestations of the idiom *nšw' yodayim*, the preposition *'l* is not what one would expect preceding the Target in the context of prayer; instead, one would expect *'l* (cf. *KAI* 202 A:11; Psalm 28:2). Nevertheless, it is not impossible to fit the occurrence of *'l* here into the general picture of this idiom and contextual type, since *nšw' yodayim 'el-T* does not contrast with a phrase *nšw' yodayim 'al-T* of another contextual type. One also notes that the Target following *nšw' yodayim* in the context of prayer may occur as an adverbial noun, without any preposition.

There is also one instance of this idiom in an Old Aramaic inscription that seems to belong to an oath context, though the gesture accompanies speech by a human to a deity, so that the context could also be interpreted as one of prayer.

Panammu I, *KAI* 214:29-30 (29) [... y]š' . ydyh . l'lh . 'bh . nšh . y'mr . hn . 'm . šmt . 'mrt . 'l . bpm . (30) zr . 'mr . qm . 'yny . 'w . dlh . 'w . [...]y . bpm . 'nšy . šry

(29) [... **he shall**] **lift up his hands to the god of his father**. He shall say on his oath, “Behold, if I have put these words in the mouth of (30) a stranger, ...!”¹⁶⁷ saying, “May my eyes be fixed or troubled!” or, “[May] my [...] in the mouth of the men of my adversary!”

¹⁶⁵ Vleeming and Wesselius, *Studies in Papyrus Amherst 63*, 2:48-49.

¹⁶⁶ Vleeming and Wesselius, *Studies in Papyrus Amherst 63*, 2:50 interpret *tst'br* as the (H)ithpa‘al stem of the root *sbr*, third person feminine singular, with the meaning of that stem derived from Syriac, “to have good tidings brought” (cf. *CSD*, 359). Their interpretation of *mrp* as “straightway” is conjectured on the basis of Aramaic *rpp* “to wink, blink, flap” (cf. *CSD*, 547) and the postbiblical Hebrew noun *herep* (cf. the idiom *herep 'ayin* “wink,” Jastrow, 368). They equate *hyh'* with Syriac *hwḥ* “to be glad” (cf. *CSD*, 130). These interpretations seem plausible enough, considering the lack of viable alternatives. Steiner and Moshavi, “A Selective Glossary,” did not include any of these three words, perhaps because they considered them doubtful. The present author is unable to find any Aramaic words or other Semitic cognates that would explain Steiner’s translation “you calm in her sobbing.”

¹⁶⁷ Gibson, *SSI*, 2:69, and Donner and Röllig, *KAI*, 2:216, 222, understand *'mr* to be an imperative and the clause which it heads to be the apodosis of the clause beginning with *hn 'm*. However, others posit an elided apodosis clause here, which would accord with the oath context. Cf. Josef Tropper, *Die Inschriften von Zincirli* (Münster:

Some features of the gesture phrase and its context resemble those of the prayer gesture “lift up the hands”: both hands are raised (note the full spelling *ydyh*), and the Target of the gesture is a deity (*l’lh ’bh* “to the god of his father”).¹⁶⁸ However, the speech that accompanies the gesture is an oath; this is indicated by the oath formula using the conditional particle *’m* and perhaps an elided apodosis clause.¹⁶⁹ The preposition preceding the Target of the gesture phrase is *lā*, the same preposition used in the similar phrase *נָסַוְ יַדְד* (singular) *lāT*, which occurs exclusively in oath contexts (Ezekiel 20:5-6, 15, 23; Psalm 106:26-27; see discussion above). Also, the raising of both hands is explicitly described in an oath context in Daniel 12:7 (discussed above), though the idiom used there is different. Therefore, understanding the gesture phrase here in *KAI* 214:29-30 as associated with oath-taking works both with the context in this passage and in comparison with other gesture phrases.

In one instance, the idiom *נָסַוְ יַדְדַיִם* occurs in a different ritual context, that of a priestly blessing.

Leviticus 9:22 **wayyiśśō’** ’ah^aron **’et-yōdōw** **’el-hō’ōm** waybōrəkem wayyerəd me^{‘a}śot
 haḥaṭṭō’ t wəhō’ōlō^h wəhaššəlōmī^{’m}
 Aaron **lifted up his hands toward the people** and blessed them. Then he came down from performing the sin offering, the burnt offering, and the *šlmym* offering.

It is interesting that this phrase includes an adverbial using the preposition *’el-*, exactly like some examples of the same phrase that occur in a context of prayer (see above), except that the Target

Ugarit-Verlag, 1993), 90-92; Conklin, *Oath Formulas*, 81. See also K. Lawson Younger in *COS*, 2:157, who, however, interprets the clause beginning with *hn ’m* as a positive declaration, “Behold, I have put...”

¹⁶⁸ Seely, “The Raised Hand of God,” 416, mentions the gesture here in the context of prayer gestures.

¹⁶⁹ Conklin, *Oath Formulas*, 81. Cf. Gibson, *SSI*, 2:72-73, 75. As Gibson notes, the particle *’m* is typical of Canaanite dialects and not of Aramaic; it seems to be peculiar to the dialect of Zinjirli, in which this inscription is written.

following the preposition is a group of people and not a deity or a deity's dwelling-place.¹⁷⁰ Since there are many instances in which different contextual types correspond to the use of different prepositions in a gesture phrase, it is worth considering whether this example in Leviticus 9:22 could somehow be classed in the same contextual type as those cited above. In fact, there are some common threads between this example in Leviticus 9:22 and the others, which could be taken to indicate that all of these examples properly belong to a single contextual type, despite the wide variation in the identity of the Target. In both Psalm 134:2 and Leviticus 9:22, a clause headed by the verb "bless" (*berak*) is conjoined to the gesture clause. The verb *berak* can be used both in the sense of giving praise to Yahweh and in the sense of Yahweh (or his priest) bestowing blessings on people.¹⁷¹ Another thread common to some of these instances is that the gesture accompanies the offering of sacrifice. Sacrifice is explicitly mentioned in connection with the gesture in the two Ugaritic passages cited above. Aside from common threads between the examples of *nšw' yodayim*, it is also useful to compare the idiom *pōraš kappayim*, which occurs in a context of prayer but which may extend into a context of blessing the people, a context very similar to Leviticus 9:22, in at least one passage (1 Kings 8:54-55, discussed below). However, although this evidence is intriguing, it is not enough to make a compelling case for all of these examples belonging to a single contextual type. It may simply be that, in this case, there is overlap in the form of the phrase used in different contexts.

Finally, there is one instance in the Hebrew Bible in which the idiom occurs in a poetic passage describing the actions of various cosmic elements during a theophany.

¹⁷⁰ Cf. Baruch A. Levine, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Leviticus* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 57. Milgrom describes the gesture here in Leviticus 9:22 as a "posture of prayer" without explaining how he reconciles this with the text's explicit mention of blessing the people; see Jacob Milgrom, *The Anchor Bible: Leviticus 1-16* (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 586-87.

¹⁷¹ BDB, 138-39.

Habakkuk 3:10-11a (10) *rō'u^wkō yōhī'y^lu^w hōri'y^m zērem mayim 'ōbōr nōtan tōho^wm qō^wlo^w rō^wm yōde'y^hu^w nōśō' šemeš* (11) *yōre^aḥ 'ōmad zəbulo^h*¹⁷²

(10) The mountains, having seen you, writhed. The flood swept along, the sea gave forth its voice. The sun **lifted its hands** high, (11) the moon stood in its lofty abode.

This passage describes the reactions of various elements of the cosmos (mountains, flood, sea, sun, and moon) to an appearance of Yahweh.

As it stands, the Hebrew text of this passage is extremely difficult and most likely corrupt. A number of emendations have been proposed; for our purposes here, it suffices to focus on those which impact the reading of the gesture phrase. These basically fall into three categories: 1) those which involve adding additional text to resolve the grammatical difficulties in verse 11, resulting in the sea raising its hands; 2) one which emends the text in verse 10, resulting in Yahweh performing a gesture with upraised hand; and 3) those which assign *šemeš* “sun” at the beginning of verse 11 to the end of verse 10, resulting in the sun raising its hands.

Two variations of the first approach were proposed by Stonehouse and Margulis. The former proposes that the consonantal text's *rwm ydyhw* stands for an original *ydyhm yrymw ymym* “the seas raised their hands” (or perhaps *ydyhw yrym ym* “the sea raised its hands” or *ydyhm yrymw mym* “the water raised it hands”). This would change the gesture phrase entirely, making it a form of *heri'y^m yōdayim*. In addition, he proposes that *nś'* at the end of verse 10 should be assigned to verse 11 (and, apparently, revocalized as a Niphal), thus giving *nś' šmš* “the sun withdrew.”¹⁷³ Margulis, on the basis of comparison with other biblical passages (Joshua 10:13 and Joel 3:4) and the reading of this passage in the Greek Barberini codex, proposes

¹⁷² In agreement with many commentators, the reading of the Masoretic text is emended by assigning *šemeš* “sun” to the end of verse 10 rather than the beginning of verse 11 (see discussion below) and by reading *zəbulo^h* “its lofty abode” instead of *zəbulō^h*.

¹⁷³ George Stonehouse, *The Book of Habakkuk: Introduction, Translation, and Notes on the Hebrew Text* (London: Rivingtons, 1911), 142, 239-42.

restoring the words *dm ngh`wr* before *šmš* at the beginning of verse 11; he translates this as “The Sun’s light grew dim.” This leaves the gesture phrase in verse 10 as it stands in the received Hebrew text, with *təho^wm* “the deep” (Margulis, “Abyss”) as the Agent of the gesture phrase.¹⁷⁴

The second approach is taken by Avishur, who divides the consonantal text’s *ydyhw* into two words, *yd* “hand” and *YHW* “Yahweh,” yielding the emended reading *ro^wm ycd(o) YHW nśśw`* “YHW has raised His hand to the heavens.” Avishur suggests, based on a comparison with Deuteronomy 32:40-41, that this passage in Habakkuk describes Yahweh adjuring the sun and moon to stand still.¹⁷⁵

Others, including Albright, Hiebert, and Andersen, follow the third approach by positing that the boundary between verses 10 and 11 should be placed after the word *šemeš*, thus giving *ro^wm ycd^{yhu}w nśśw` šemeš* “the sun lifted its hands high.”¹⁷⁶ This approach of moving the verse boundary finds indirect support in the Septuagint, which places the verb “lift up” at the beginning of verse 11: *epērthē ho hēlios* “the sun was lifted up” (however, this intransitive interpretation of the verb is incompatible with the Hebrew form *nśśw`*, which is therefore better placed together with *ycd^{yhu}w*).

The emendations proposed by Stonehouse, Margulis, and Avishur are provocative and, to be sure, possible. However, as is evident from the very differences between them, they involve a

¹⁷⁴ Baruch Margulis, “The Psalm of Habakkuk: A Reconstruction and Interpretation,” *ZAW* 82 (1970): 422-25. J. J. M. Roberts, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1991), 129, 141, follows this proposal of Margulis.

¹⁷⁵ Yitzhak Avishur, *Studies in Hebrew and Ugaritic Psalms* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1994), 181-83. Note that if this emendation is correct, interpreting the gesture as one of oath-taking or adjuration is not the only option, since the basic gesture phrase *nśśw` ycd* also occurs in the context of destruction or exertion of supernatural power with Yahweh as Agent (see above); this latter context would seem to be a more natural fit in Habakkuk 3:10.

¹⁷⁶ W. F. Albright, “The Psalm of Habakkuk,” in *Studies in Old Testament Prophecy*, ed. H. H. Rowley (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1950), 11; Theodore Hiebert, *God of My Victory: The Ancient Hymn in Habakkuk 3* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986), 6, 30-31; Francis I. Andersen, *The Anchor Bible: Habakkuk* (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 312, 326-33. K. Elliger, the editor for this portion of *BHS*, also adopts this approach.

high degree of risk. In this light, it seems advisable to accept the solution adopted by Albright and others, which is the simplest, involving no emendation of the consonantal text or of the received vocalization. Thus we take the sun to be the Agent of the gesture phrase, which is *נָסַוּ יָדַיִם*. The precise contextual type here does not seem to match any of the others in which this idiom occurs. Outside of the phrase itself, there are no explicit indicators of prayer or of oath-taking. Possible interpretations of this gesture will be discussed further in chapter 5.

2.2.19. *נָסַוּ יָדַיִם* *kappayim* “Lift Up the Palms”

Similarly to *נָסַוּ יָדַיִם*, the basic gesture phrase *נָסַוּ יָדַיִם* “lift up the palms” occurs in contexts of prayer.¹⁷⁷

Psalm 63:5	ken ^a bərəkəkəkə bəḥayyay bəšimkə נָסַוּ יָדַיִם <i>kappayim</i> So will I bless you throughout my life, in your name I will lift up my palms.
Psalm 119:48	נָסַוּ יָדַיִם <i>-kappayim</i> ^{el} -mišwotē ^{ko} ^a šer ^o ḥəbtī ^y wə ^o šī ^y ḥə ^h bəḥuqqē ^{ko} I lift up my palms to your commandments, which I love; I meditate on your decrees.
Lamentations 2:19	qu ^w mi ^y ronni ^y ballayl ^o (^h) ləro ^š ^a šmuro ^w t šipki ^y kammayim libbek nokah pəne ^y ^a donay נָסַוּ יָדַיִם <i>kappayim</i> ^{al} -nəpəš ^o wləlayik hə ^a ṭu ^w pi ^y m bəro ^o ḥb bəro ^š kəl-ḥu ^w šo ^w t Arise, cry out in the night, at the beginning of the watches; pour out your heart like water before the Lord; lift up your palms to him for the life of your children, who faint with hunger at the ends of all the streets.
Lamentations 3:41	נָסַוּ יָדַיִם <i>kappayim</i> ^{el} - <i>kappayim</i> ^{el} - ^{el} baššəməyim Let us lift up our hearts with our palms to God in heaven!

¹⁷⁷ Cf. the assessment of Gruber, *Aspects of Nonverbal Communication*, 39-41. In this chapter, the literal translation of *kap* as “palm” is maintained. The precise interpretation of *kap* in these idioms will be discussed further in chapter 3, where it will be argued that the sense, like that of *yad*, is simply “hand.”

In Lamentations 3:41, the preposition *'el-* seems to have the sense of “with.”¹⁷⁸ Thus, although “our hearts” is the direct object of the verb, it is possible to see the gesture phrase *נָסַו' kappayim* in this verse.

In the three cases where the Target of the gesture is expressed, the preposition preceding it is invariably *'el-*. This is consistent with the use of *'el-* with the idiom *נָסַו' yodayim*, though the latter idiom shows more variation in the preposition used (see discussion above). With *נָסַו' kappayim*, the prepositional phrase is not needed to distinguish the idiom from others using the same basic gesture phrase.

2.2.20. *nōtan yōd* “Put Forth the Hand”

This basic gesture phrase occurs once in the context of destruction or exertion of supernatural power. The full phrase in this instance is *nōtan yōd bəT* “put forth the hand against T.”

Exodus 7:4 *wəlo'-yišma' 'alekem par'o^h wənōtatti^y 'et-yōdi^y bəmišrōyim wəho^wše'ti^y 'et-šib'otay 'et-'ammi^y bəne^y-yišrō'el me'erēš mišrayim bišpōṭi^ym gədoli^ym*
 Pharaoh will not listen to you, **but I will put forth my hand against Egypt** and bring my armies, my people, the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt with great judgments.

The phrase *nōtan yōd bəT*, which occurs only in this verse, is usually translated as “lay the hand upon T.” The verb *nōtan* is thus interpreted to mean “put, lay,” and the preposition *bə* is interpreted to mean “on, upon.”¹⁷⁹ However, the verb *nōtan* can also be rendered “put forth,

¹⁷⁸ BDB, 40, definition 5; Gruber, *Aspects of Nonverbal Communication*, 40-41; cf. Delbert R. Hillers, *The Anchor Bible: Lamentations* (2nd edition; New York: Doubleday, 1992), 117.

¹⁷⁹ BDB, 680-81, definition 2.b.; Vulgate *inmittamque manum meam super Aegyptum* “and I will set my hand upon Egypt”; KJV, RSV, NRSV, NIV, NJB, all “I will lay my hand upon Egypt” or similar; the German Einheitsübersetzung *Deshalb werde ich meine Hand auf Ägypten legen*; the Van Dyke Arabic translation *ḥatta 'aj'ala yadī 'alā mišra* “until I lay my hand upon Egypt”; etc.

stretch out,” particularly when the hand is the direct object (cf. the other gesture phrases below), and the preposition *bə* can also be rendered “against.” This suggests that the phrase in question can also be translated as “put forth the hand against” or similarly, that is, without implying direct contact.¹⁸⁰ Two considerations give support to the latter possibility, though the former one cannot be ruled out. First, there is a parallel between this phrase in verse 4 and the phrase *nəṭəḥ yəd ‘al T* nearby in verse 5, both phrases being followed by a result clause describing bringing Yahweh’s people out of Egypt (*wəhoʷše ʿtiʷ*... “and I will bring...”). Since *nəṭəḥ yəd ‘al T* can be shown to describe a non-contact gesture in at least many of its attestations (see the examples listed under *nəṭəḥ yəd*), it seems reasonable to suppose that this is also the case with the phrase in verse 4. Second, this phrase can be compared with others that refer to raising or extending the hand with violent intent and that use the preposition *bə* before the Target in the sense of “against” (cf. *heriʷm yəd bəT*, *šəlah yəd bəT*).¹⁸¹

The basic phrase *nətan yəd* is also used in the context of a pledge of allegiance. The full phrase is *nətan yəd taḥat T* “put forth the hand in submission to T.”

¹⁸⁰ Cf. BDB, 679-80, definitions 1.y. and 1.z. A minority of biblical translators interpret this passage accordingly, e.g. the Luther Bibel (1912) *auf daß ich meine Hand in Ägypten beweise*; the Italian Nuova Diodati (1991) *e così io stenderò la mia mano sull’ Egitto*. William H. C. Propp, *The Anchor Bible: Exodus 1-18* (New York: Doubleday, 1999), 262, 282, though he translates this passage “and I will lay my arm upon Egypt,” points out a contextual parallel with *nəṭəḥ zəroʷ* “extend the arm” in Exodus 6:6 and remarks that “Moses and Aaron, Yahweh’s representatives, repeatedly extend their arms and rods over Egypt to bring down calamity.” He further remarks that the preposition *bə* in Exodus 7:4 (referred to by him erroneously as *‘al*) can mean “against.”

¹⁸¹ E. Lipiński in *TDOT*, 10:95, considers *nətan yəd bəT* to have “become a simple variation of *šəlah yəd bə* (Gen. 37:22; 1 S. 24:7; 11[6, 10]; 26:9; etc.),” though Lipiński ascribes a telic sense to both idioms, translating them as “lay violent hands upon a person.” In addition to the idioms already mentioned, comparison could be made with *həyəṭəḥ yəd bəT* “of the hand, be upon/against T” (Genesis 16:12; 37:27; Exodus 9:3; Deuteronomy 2:15; 13:10; Joshua 2:19; Judges 2:15; 1 Samuel 5:9; 7:13; 12:15; 18:17, 21; 24:13-14, 17), which, though it has a figurative sense in most or all of its attestations, presents a similar problem of whether direct contact is referred to. Both *nətan yəd bə* and *həyəṭəḥ yəd bə* are used with *oʷreṭ* “neck” as the object of the preposition; in the case of *həyəṭəḥ yəd bə oʷreṭ T*, the one example is found in the Hebrew Bible (Genesis 49:8), while in the case of *nətan yəd bə oʷreṭ T*, the examples are found in the War Scroll of the Dead Sea Scrolls (1QM 12:11; 19:3). Although these phrases with “neck” seem to refer to a contact gesture, the same is not necessarily true of the shorter phrases in which the object of the preposition is a person or country and not a body part.

2 Kings 10:15
(2x) wayyelek miššom wayyimšo' 'et-yəho^wnəḏəb bən-rekəb liqrə'to^w
waybərəkehu^w wayyo'mer 'elə^yw h^ayeš 'et-ləbəbəkə yəšər ka'^ašer ləbəbi^y
'im-ləbəbəkə wayyo'mer yəho^wnəḏəb yeš wəyeš **təno^h 'et-yəḏəkə wayyitten**
yədo^w wayya'aləhu^w 'elə^yw 'el-hammerkəb^h

(Jehu) went from there and discovered Jehonadab son of Rechab coming to meet him. He greeted him and said to him, “Is your heart right like my heart is with yours?” Jehonadab said, “It is.” “If so, then **put forth your hand.**” **He put forth his hand.** Then he lifted him up to him into the chariot.

1 Chronicles
29:23-24 (23) wayyešəb šəlomo^h 'al-kisse' YHWH ləməlek taḥat-dəwi^yd 'əbi^yw
wayyašlah wayyišmə'u^w 'elə^yw kəl-yišrə'el (24) wəkəl-haššori^ym
wəhaggibbori^ym wəgam kəl-bəne^y hamməlek dəwi^yd **nəṭənu^w yəḏ taḥat**
šəlomo^h hamməlek

(23) Solomon sat on Yahweh's throne as king in succession to David his father. He prospered, and all Israel listened to him. (24) All the officials, the warriors, and also David's sons **put forth (their) hands in submission to king Solomon.**¹⁸²

In both of these examples, the descriptive setting is similar: a narrative describing one or more people giving political allegiance to one who has been anointed king (2 Kings 9:2-3, 6; 1 Chronicles 9:22). In the first example, the Target is not part of the gesture phrase, while in the second example, the Target is introduced by the preposition *taḥat* “in submission to” (literally “under”). In both 2 Kings 10:15 and 1 Chronicles 29:23-24, the unequal relationship that the gesture affirms between the Agent and the Target may correspond to a difference in physical height. In 2 Kings 10:15, Jehu is up in a chariot, while the one putting forth his hand, Jehonadab, is on the ground. In 1 Chronicles 29:23-24, Solomon is seated on a throne which is perhaps elevated.¹⁸³

¹⁸² For this translation of the idiom with *taḥat*, cf. BDB, 680, definition 1.z.; Lipiński in *TDOT*, 10:95.

¹⁸³ It is not certain what exactly “Yahweh's throne” (*kisse' YHWH*) refers to here. In Isaiah 6:1, there is a description of Yahweh's throne in the temple (*he'kəl*) as “high and lifted up.” 1 Kings 10:18-20 = 2 Chronicles 9:17-19 describes the throne Solomon commissioned for his palace (after this event described in 1 Chronicles 29) as “great” (*gəḏo^wl*) and situated at the top of six steps. In the Hebrew Bible, a king's greatness is associated with the height of his throne; see, for example, 2 Kings 25:28; Isaiah 14:13; Jeremiah 17:12.

In another passage, what appears to be a similar gesture of submission or of pledging allegiance is described using the full gesture phrase *nōtan yōd (adv)T ləP_{exp}* “put forth the hand (toward) T to P_{exp}.”

Lamentations 5:6 **mišrayim nōtannu^w yōd ’aššū^wr lišbo^a’ ləḥem**

We put forth (our) hand to Egypt, to Assyria to be satisfied with bread.

The full gesture phrase here includes a purpose clause *ləP_{exp}*, which distinguishes the phrase in this context from others where the context is that of an oath. It would make little sense for the speakers in Lamentations 5:6 to be putting themselves under obligation to be satisfied with bread; instead, they put forth the hand with the expectation of being satisfied with bread. In this passage, as in 2 Kings 10:15 and 1 Chronicles 29:23-24, the context refers to an inferior party submitting or giving allegiance to a superior party.

The basic gesture phrase *nōtan yōd* also occurs alone, without any additional arguments, once in a context of surrender.

Jeremiah 50:14-15 (14) ’irku^w ’al-bōbel sōbi^yb kəl-dorəke^y qešet yōdu^w ’elē^yhō ’al-təḥməlu^w ’el-ḥeš ki^y IYHWH ḥəṭō’ō^h (15) ḥəri^y’u^w ’əle^yhō sōbi^yb **nōtəno^h yōdōh** nōpəlu^w ’ōšyo^wtē^yhō nēhersu^w ḥo^wmo^wtē^yhō ki^y niqmat YHWH hi^y’ hinnōqəmu^w bōh ka[’]āšer ’ōsəto^h ’āsu^w-ləh

(14) Array yourselves in siege against Babylon, all you archers. Shoot at her; spare no arrows, for she has sinned against Yahweh. (15) Shout against her all around. **She has put forth her hand**; her bulwarks have fallen; her walls are torn down, for it is the vengeance of Yahweh. Take vengeance against her; as she has done, do to her.

Here the descriptive setting is one of battle, and the parallelism with “her bulwarks have fallen” and “her walls are torn down” suggests the utter defeat and humiliation associated with the gesture; thus the description of this gesture as one of surrender is appropriate.¹⁸⁴

There is also one occurrence of the basic phrase in an oath context. Here the full phrase is *nōtan yōd ləP_{obl}* “put forth the hand to P_{obl}.”

Ezra 10:18-19 (18) wayyimmōše^y mibbāne^y hakkoh^āni^ym^ʾ ašer hošiy^{bu}w nōšiy^m nōkriyyo^wt mibbāne^y yešu^{wa}‘ ben-yo^wšōdōq wə‘ eḥō^yw ma[‘] ašeyō^h wə‘ li^y‘ ezer wəyōri^yb u^wgədalyō^h (19) wayyittānu^w yōdōm ləho^wšiy^ʾ nōše^yhēm wa^ʾ ašōmōm¹⁸⁵ ‘e^yl-šo^ʾn ‘al-‘ašmōtōm

(18) There were found, of the sons of the priests who had brought back foreign wives, the following: of the sons of Jeshua son of Jozadak and his brothers: Maaseiah, Eliezer, Jarib, and Gedaliah. (19) **They put forth their hands to send away their wives.** Their guilt offering was a ram of the flock for their guilt.

The descriptive setting here is the examination of priests who had been found guilty of marrying foreign wives (verses 14-16). The use of *lə* plus an infinitive clause, clearly denoting an obligation and not an expectation, bears similarity to the phrases *heniy^yp yōd* “elevate the hand” and *nōšō^ʾ yōd* “lift up the hand” in the contextual type of oath-taking.¹⁸⁶

In one instance, the contextual type is uncertain; the context could be a pledge of allegiance or an oath. In this instance, the phrase occurs without any additional arguments.

Ezekiel 17:18 u^wbōzō^h ‘ōlō^h ləhōper bəri^yt wəhinne^h nōtan yōdo^w wəkōl-‘elle^h ‘ōšō^h lo^ʾ yimmōlet

He (the king of Judah) despised the oath, breaking the treaty; and behold, **he had put forth his hand!** Having done all this, he shall not escape.

¹⁸⁴ Cf. BDB, 680, definition 1.z.; Ackroyd, “yād,” in *TDOT*, 5:411.

¹⁸⁵ The Masoretic text reads *wa^ʾšēmī^m*, “and the guilty ones.” The emendation, which makes better sense of the passage, is supported by Leviticus 5:15 and by the Septuagint.

¹⁸⁶ La Bible de Jérusalem (1981) for this verse has *ils s’engagèrent par serment*; similarly, La Sacra Bibbia Nuova Riveduta (1994) has *Essi promisero, dando la mano*. Cf. NIV “they all gave their hands in pledge,” RSV “they pledged themselves”; also Ackroyd, “yād,” in *TDOT* 5:411.

The treachery of the king of Judah involves the violation of some performative act that he had done by putting forth his hand, and it is not certain whether this performative act is the taking of the oath that is explicitly mentioned in this verse or a separate pledge of allegiance. Nevertheless, as has been noted, the two contextual types are distinct, marked by different contextual cues and different phrase structure (when more than the verb and Sender are mentioned).

Finally, the basic phrase *nōtan yōd* occurs once in a context of approaching the temple for a pilgrimage festival. The full phrase is *nōtan yōd ləT* “put forth the hand to T.”

2 Chronicles 30:8 ‘attə^h ’al-taqšu^w ‘ōrpəkem ka’abo^wte^ykem **tənu^w-yōd laYHWH** u^wbo’u^w
ləmiqdəšo^w ’ašer hiqdi^yš lə’o^wlōm wə’ibdu^w ’et-YHWH ’εlohe^ykem wəyōšob
mikkem h^aro^wn ’appo^w

Now do not be stubborn (lit. stiffen your necks) like your fathers. **Put forth the hand to Yahweh**, enter his sanctuary which he has sanctified forever, and serve Yahweh your God, that he might retract his anger from you.

In this passage, king Hezekiah is inviting the children of Israel to come to the temple in Jerusalem to observe the festival of Passover (verses 1-7). The contextual type here might be akin to that of the pledge of allegiance. However, while the Target of the gesture phrase (Yahweh) is superior to the Agent (the children of Israel), the fact that the Target is a deity within his temple opens up more interpretive possibilities; for example, this could be a ritual gesture of approach or one connected with presenting an offering (these possibilities will be discussed further in chapter 5). Also, instead of an unmarked adverbial Target (as in Lamentations 5:6), one preceded by *taḥat* (as in 1 Chronicles 29:24), or a Purpose/Expectation clause with an infinitive preceded by *lə* (as in Lamentations 5:6), we have a Target preceded by *lə*.

2.2.21. *pəras kappayim* “Spread the Palms”

Gesture phrases with a verb having the root *prś* commonly occur in contexts of prayer or entreaty.¹⁸⁷ The most frequently encountered basic gesture phrase in this kind of context is *pəras kappayim* “spread the palms,” with the verb in the Qal stem. There are eleven occurrences of this basic gesture phrase, all found in the Hebrew Bible. A Target following the basic gesture phrase may be introduced by the preposition *’el-* (Exodus 9:29, 33; 1 Kings 8:38; Job 11:13; Ezra 9:5; 2 Chronicles 6:29) or *la* (Psalm 44:21). The Target may also occur without any preposition, either as an unmarked adverbial (1 Kings 8:22, 54) or with the adverbial suffix *-ʔh* (2 Chronicles 6:13).

Exodus 9:29	<p>wayyo’mer ’eloʔw moše^h kəše’tiʔ ’et-ho’iʔr ’əproś ’et-kappay ’el-YHWH haqqolo^wt yeħdolu^wn wəhabbərød lo’ yihye^h-’o^wd ləma’an teda’ kiʔ laYHWH ho’ərəš</p> <p>Moses said to him, “When I go out of the city, I will spread my palms to Yahweh. The noises will cease, and there will not be hail any longer, so you will know that the earth belongs to Yahweh.”</p>
Exodus 9:33	<p>wayyeše’ moše^h me’im par’o^h ’et-ho’iʔr wayyipros kappəʔw ’el-YHWH wayyaħdolu^w haqqolo^wt wəhabbərød u^wməʔor lo’-nittak ’əršə^h</p> <p>Moses went out of the city from Pharaoh. He spread his palms to Yahweh. The noises and the hail ceased, and rain was not poured out upon the earth.</p>
1 Kings 8:22	<p>wayya’^amod šəlomo^h lipneʔ mizbaħ YHWH nəged kəl-qəhal yiśro’el wayyipros kappəʔw haššəməyim</p> <p>Solomon stood before the altar of Yahweh, opposite the whole congregation of Israel, and spread his palms (toward) heaven.</p>
1 Kings 8:38	<p>kəl-təpillo^h kəl-təħinno^h ’ašer tihe^h ləkəl-ho’oðom ləkol ’amməkə yiśro’el ’ašer yedə’u^wn ’iʔš nəga’ ləbəbo^w u^wpəras kappəʔw ’el-habbayit hazze^h</p> <p>Every prayer and every supplication of any person of your whole people Israel, each of whom will know the affliction of his heart and will spread his palms to this house,</p>
1 Kings 8:54	<p>wayhiʔ kəkallo^wt šəlomo^h ləhitpallel ’el-YHWH ’et kəl-hattəpillo^h wəhattəħinno^h hazzo’^t qəm millipneʔ mizbaħ YHWH mikkəro^a’ al-birkəʔw wəkappəʔw pərušo^wt haššəməyim</p>

¹⁸⁷ Cf. Gruber, *Aspects of Nonverbal Communication*, 25-32, 41-44.

When Solomon finished praying to Yahweh this whole prayer and supplication, he rose from before the altar of Yahweh, from kneeling, **his palms being spread (toward) heaven.**

Psalms 44:21-22 (21) 'im-šōkaḥnu^w šem 'ēlohe^ynu^w **wanniproš kappe^ynu^w lə'el zər** (22) h^alo' 'ēlohi^ym yaḥ^aqər-zo't ki^y-hu^w yode^a ta^alumo^wt leb

(21) If we forget the name of our God **and spread our palms to a foreign god,** (22) will God not search this out? For he knows the secrets of the heart.

Job 11:13-15 (13) 'im-'atto^h h^aki^yno^wt libbekō **u^wpəraštō 'elō^yw kappəkō** (14) 'im-'ōwen bəyōdəkō harḥi^yqehu^w wə'al-tašken bə'ohōlē^ykō 'awlō^h (15) ki^y-'ōz tiššō' pōne^ykō mimmu^wm wəḥōyi^ytō mušəq wəlo' ti^yrō'

(13) If you direct your heart **and spread your palms to him,** (14) if wickedness is in your hand, put it far away. Do not let injustice dwell in your tents. (15) For then you will lift up your face from blemish, you will be established and will not fear.

Ezra 9:5 u^wbəminḥat hō'erēb qamti^y mitta^ani^yti^y u^wbəqər'i^y bigdi^y u^wmə'i^yli^y wə'ēkrə'ō^h 'al-birkay wə'ēprəšō^h **kappay 'el-YHWH 'ēlohəy**

At (the time of) the evening sacrifice, I rose from my fasting, having torn my garment and robe. I knelt **and spread my palms to Yahweh my God.**

2 Chronicles 6:12-13 (2x) (12) wayya^amod lipne^y mizbah YHWH nēged kəl-qəhal yišrō'el **wayyiproš kappə^yw** (13) ki^y-'ōšō^h šəlomo^h kiyyo^wr nəḥōšet wayyittənehu^w bəto^wk hō'^azōrō^h ḥōmeš 'ammo^wt 'ōrko^w wəḥōmeš 'ammo^wt rəḥbo^w wə'ammo^wt šōlo^wš qo^wmōto^w wayya^amod 'ōlō^yw wayyibrak 'al-birkō^yw nēged kəl-qəhal yišrō'el **wayyiproš kappə^yw haššōməymō^h**

(12) He stood before the altar of Yahweh, opposite the whole congregation of Israel, **and spread his palms**— (13) for Solomon had made a bronze basin and had put it in the court, it being five cubits long, five cubits wide, and three cubits high, and he stood upon it, knelt opposite the whole congregation of Israel, **and spread his palms heavenward.**

2 Chronicles 6:29-30 (29) kəl-təpillō^h kəl-təḥinnō^h 'ašer yihye^h ləkəl-'ōdōm u^wləkəl 'amməkō yišrō'el 'ašer yedə'u^w 'i^yš nig'o^w u^wmak'obo^w **u^wpəraš kappə^yw 'el-habbayit hazzē^h** (30) wə'atto^h tišma' min-haššōmayim məko^wn šibtəkō wəšōlaḥtō wənōtatto lō'i^yš kəkəl-dərōkō^yw 'ašer tēda' 'et-ləbōbo^w ki^y 'atto^h ləbaddəkō yōda'tō 'et-ləbab bəne^y hō'ōdōm

(29) As for every prayer and every supplication of any person or of your whole people Israel, each of whom will know his affliction and his pain **and will spread his palms to this house,** (30) may you hear it in heaven, your dwelling-place, and may you forgive and give to that man according to his ways, since you know his heart, for you alone know the hearts of humankind.

Although there are eleven occurrences of *p̄ras̄ kappayim*, only seven gesture events are described in the passages quoted above. The two Exodus passages describe the same event of Moses spreading his palms. 1 Kings 8:22, describing Solomon spreading his palms in a dedicatory prayer, is parallel to 2 Chronicles 6:12-13, and the description of the gesture is reiterated in 1 Kings 8:54. Likewise, 1 Kings 8:38 is parallel to 2 Chronicles 6:29-30.

In Job 11:13-15, the words *kappəkō* “your palms” and *bəyōdəkō* “in your hand” seem to be connected to each other by the context. To paraphrase the passage, Job’s friend Zophar tells him that if he prays with spread palms, he should make sure that his hands are free of wickedness, the assumption being that if wickedness were in the spread hands, God would see it (cf. verse 11, also Isaiah 1:15). In extant Masoretic manuscripts, the words are pointed as plural and singular respectively (“palms” and “hand”). However, in the consonantal text, the two words are ambiguous as to number; *kpk* can be read as “your palm” or “your palms,” and *bydk* can be read as “in your hand” or “in your hands.” In general, the various versions of this passage maintain the same variation in number found in the Masoretic text (“your palms” and “in your hand”), but the Septuagint has *en chersin sou* “in your hands” (plural) for *bydk*, making the two words for “hand” uniformly plural. This, together with the fact that the same word for “hand” (*cheir*) is used in verses 13 and 14, strengthens the contextual link between the two words in the Greek version of this passage.¹⁸⁸ For the purposes of this study, it is important to observe that the plural number of “palms” in *kpk* is uniformly maintained in the versions, despite the contrast with the singular “hand” in most versions of verse 14. This likely indicates that the gesture of spreading both palms in prayer was commonly recognized among the transmitters of this text (even if only

¹⁸⁸ The reading of the Masoretic text, with variation in number between “your palms” and “in your hand,” is reflected in almost all of the modern translations surveyed by the present writer (KJV, NIV, RSV, NRSV, NJB, the major German and French translations, and the Arabic Van Dyke translation). The one exception to this is the Italian Sacra Biblia Nuova Riveduta (1994), which follows the Septuagint’s consistent reading “hands” in verses 13 and 14: *e tendi verso Dio le mani* (verse 13), *se allontanati l’iniquità che è nelle tue mani* (verse 14).

by familiarity with similar gesture idioms elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible). It does not prove that the use of both hands is original in this passage; however, in the absence of textual warrant for an emendation, the plural reading is maintained here, keeping this passage in conformity with other examples of gesture phrases using the root *prś*.

Since there is always only one Target following the basic gesture phrase in this contextual type, one might posit a relatively simple phrase structure: *pʾraś kappayim ʿel-/lə/(adv)T* “spread the palms to/(adv)T,” that is, with a single type of Target, optionally introduced by the preposition *ʿel-* or *lə* or marked with the suffix *-ʾh*. However, a close reading of these passages suggests that what we have are elliptical forms of a full gesture phrase *pʾraś kappayim (adv)T_{dir} ʿel-/ləT_{add}* “spread the palms toward T_{dir} to T_{add}.” The Target occurs without a preposition only in 1 Kings 8:22, 54 and 2 Chronicles 6:13, in the single context of Solomon spreading his palms “heavenward” in his dedicatory prayer. By the time Solomon begins his prayer, the glory of Yahweh has already filled the temple (see 1 Kings 8:10-13), suggesting that Solomon spreads his palms facing the temple to address Yahweh (as the Target/Addressee of the gesture), while the adverbial “(toward) heaven” simply describes the upward motion of the hands (the Target/Directional) that is required in order to strike this pose. In the dedicatory prayer itself (1 Kings 8:38; 2 Chronicles 6:29), Solomon refers to people spreading their palms *ʿel-habbayit hazzē^h* “to this house,” the Target being on a horizontal plane relative to the Agent, which is consistent with the idea that Solomon’s gesture is also addressed horizontally toward the temple.¹⁸⁹ Elsewhere, the preposition *ʿel-* or *lə* introduces a deity who is the Target/Addressee of

¹⁸⁹ In the accounts of Solomon’s dedicatory prayer in 1 Kings 8 and 2 Chronicles 6, there is an interesting tension between notions of God’s location relative to one offering prayer. Although some elements of the account seem to presuppose that God’s location is in the temple (in addition to the preceding discussion, see 1 Kings 8:12-13, and note the phrase “pray and supplicate to you in this house” in 1 Kings 8:33), he is also said to hear prayers from his dwelling-place in heaven (1 Kings 8:30, 32, 34, 36, 39, 43, 45, 49). Many commentators have sought to link these two notions to two stages of redaction, while others take the two notions to be reconcilable as aspects of a single doctrine. See Jacob M. Myers, *The Anchor Bible: II Chronicles* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1965), 36;

the gesture (Exodus 9:29, 33; Psalm 44:21; Job 11:13; Ezra 9:5). Therefore, two kinds of Targets may be discerned among the examples of *p̄ras̄ kappayim* listed above: a Target/Directional appearing as an unmarked adverbial or with the suffix *-ṣ^h*, and a Target/Addressee introduced by the preposition *ʿel-* or *l̄ə*. Occurrences of the phrase may generally be seen as elliptical, with one or the other kind of Target left unexpressed.

2.2.22. *peras̄ (bə)yōdayim* “Spread Out the Hands”

A basic gesture phrase using the Piel form *peras̄* and the Sender *yōdayim* “hands” occurs four times in the Hebrew Bible. Each of these occurrences seems to belong to a slightly different contextual type. One occurrence describes a prayer to Yahweh whose content is a desperate plea for help. The full gesture phrase in this instance is *peras̄ yōdayim ʿel-T* “spread out the hands toward T.”

Psalm 143:6 **peras̄ti^y yōday ʿel^ykə napši^y kə ʿeres-^ayepō^h ləkə səlō^h**

I spread out my hands to you, my soul is like a thirsty land for you. Selah.

In another poetic passage, the gesture seems to accompany a plea for help, but it does not appear to be directed to Yahweh as a prayer. The full gesture phrase is *peras̄ bəyōdayim* “spread out the hands.” The relationship between the verb and the Sender is mediated by the preposition *bə*, and there is no Target constituent, unlike the previous contextual type.

Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomist School* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), 195-97; Gruber, *Aspects of Nonverbal Communication*, 27; John M. Lundquist, “The Legitimizing Role of the Temple in the Origin of the State,” in *Temples of the Ancient World*, ed. Donald W. Parry (Salt Lake City: Deseret, 1994), 222-23. Practices of addressing an earthly object or location in prayer are common cross-culturally, even in cultures in which God is believed to reside in heaven or to be omnipresent; verbal descriptions of such prayers may designate either the earthly object or God’s actual location as a Target. Thus, at least in this case, notions of God’s location are not a decisive factor in analyzing the phrases that describe prayer gestures.

Lamentations
1:17

perás^h šiyyo^wn bəyǝde^yhə 'e^yn mənəhem ləh šiwwə^h YHWH ləya^{'a}qob
səbi^ybə^yw šərə^yw həyətə^h yəru^wšəla(y)im ləniddə^h be^yne^yhem

Zion spread out her hands, (but) there was no one to comfort her. Yahweh commanded for Jacob that those around him be his foes, Jerusalem being as an impure thing among them.

Here Zion, personified as a female, seeks for a male comforter (*mənəhem*) in a time of distress.

The context of the gesture compares well with the first contextual type, except that this is a general plea for help and not a prayer specifically addressed to Yahweh. Here the lack of a specific Target correlates with the lack of an adverbial phrase; the assumed Target is an undefined “somebody” or “anybody” who is willing to help.

Isaiah 25:10-11 uses the same basic gesture phrase, *perás yǝdayim*, to describe a swimmer spreading his hands to swim.

Isaiah 25:10-11

(10) ki^y tǝnu^{wa}h yad-YHWH bəhər hazze^h wənədo^wš mo^w 'əb tahtə^yw
kəhiddu^wš matben bəmo^w madmenə^h (11) u^w**perás yǝdə^yw** bəqirbo^w ka^{'a}šer
yǝpərəš haššoḥe^h lišho^wt wəhišpi^l ga^{'a}wəto^w 'im 'ərbo^wt yǝdə^yw

(10) For the hand of Yahweh will rest on this mountain, Moab will be trodden down at the foot of it like the treading of the straw-heap in Madmenah.¹⁹⁰ (11) **He will spread out his hands** in its midst as a swimmer spreads out (his hands) to swim, but his pride will be brought low despite the artifice of his hands.

The gesture described here, spreading the hands to swim, is not a ritual gesture but a utilitarian movement. This would appear to be totally unrelated to ritual and communicative uses of the gesture of spreading the hands. However, the passage could be interpreted as alluding to spreading the hands in a desperate plea (the first and second contextual types). As Moab is being

¹⁹⁰ While most translators take this word to mean “dung-pit,” it can also be a proper name, Madmenah, a place in the territory of Benjamin (Isaiah 10:31), and it is translated accordingly in the Jewish Publication Society’s *Tanakh* translation (1985). Cf. BDB, 199. The word immediately preceding is *bmy* “in the water of” in the consonantal text, which would tend to support the reading “dung-pit,” but the Qere has the neutral *bəmo^w* “in.”

trodden down, he spreads his hands in prayer or in a plea for mercy, and he does this so desperately that the action is likened to the flailing motions of a swimmer.¹⁹¹

In a fourth passage, also in Isaiah, the basic gesture phrase *peras̄ yodayim* is used to describe Yahweh reaching out to his people. The full gesture phrase is *peras̄ yodayim 'el-T* “spread out the hands toward T.”

Isaiah 65:1-2 (1) *nidraštiy ləlo^w šo'olu^w nimše'tiy ləlo' biqšuniy 'omarti^y hinni^y hinni^y 'el-go^wy lo'-qoro' bišmi^y* (2) ***peras̄ti^y yoday*** *kəl-hayyo^wm 'el-'am so^wrer*
haholəki^ym hadderek lo'-to^wb 'aḥar maḥšəbote^yhem

(1) I revealed myself to those who did not inquire, I was found by those who did not seek me out; I said, “Here I am, here I am” to a nation that did not call upon my name, (2) **I spread out my hands all day to a rebellious people**, who walk in a way that is not good, after their own thoughts.

Here the gesture phrase is parallel to *hinni^y* “here I am.” The gesture here can be interpreted as one of entreaty, somewhat like the first two contextual types.¹⁹² The main difference is in the relative status of the participants in the gesture. In the first two contextual types, the Agent is of a lower status than the (explicit or assumed) Target, while here the roles are reversed. Instead of a plea for help, which would be unexpected of Yahweh (or of any high-status Agent addressing a lower-status Target), the entreaty takes on the character of an invitation, here specifically an invitation to repent.

¹⁹¹ This interpretation is absent from the commentaries known to the present writer, most of which understand the passage to mean that the personified Moab is trampled and “swimming” in a dung-pit. Typical of these commentaries is David Stacey, *Isaiah Chapters 1-39* (London: Epworth Press, 1993), 155: “Moab is now swimming, and drowning, in excrement.” Cf. Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: The English Text, with Introduction, Exposition, and Notes, vol. II: Chapters 19 to 39* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), 201. However, H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Isaiah, Volume I: Chapters 1-39* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1971), 400, expresses some doubt about this interpretation: “It is very questionable whether the Israelites in days of old had dung-pits of such huge proportions that a man could swim in them.” An additional problem here is that the third-person masculine singular suffix of *bəqirbo^w* “in its midst” does not seem to agree with the word *madmenə^h*, which is most likely feminine. The problem is resolved if we take the antecedent to be the same as the antecedent of *tahtə^w* “at the foot of it” in verse 10, namely [*h*]əḥor *hazze^h* “this mountain,” the temple mount in Jerusalem. The image of spreading the hands in prayer then becomes doubly appropriate.

¹⁹² Gruber, *Aspects of Nonverbal Communication*, 41-43.

2.2.23. *perás kappayim* “Spread Out the Palms”

A final use of the root *prś* to describe a gesture is in the basic gesture phrase *perás kappayim* “spread out the palms.” This is found in two biblical passages. The contextual type is that of a prayer, specifically a desperate plea for help, like the first contextual type described above under *perás (bə)yodayim* “spread out the hands.” In both passages, the basic gesture phrase occurs without any adverbial constituents.

Isaiah 1:15 **u^wbəpəriškem kappə^ykem** ’a[‘]li^ym ’e^ynay mikkem gam ki^y-tarbu^w təpillō^h ’e^ynenni^y šome^{a‘} yəde^ykem dōmi^ym mōle’u^w

When you spread out your palms, I will hide my eyes from you; even as you keep on praying, I am not listening. Your hands are full of blood!

Jeremiah 4:31 ki^y qo^wl kəḥo^wlō^h šōma[‘]ti^y šōrō^h kəməbki^yrō^h qo^wl bat-šiyyo^wn tityappe^{aḥ} **təpərəś kappə^yḥō** ’o^wy-nō’ li^y ki^y-’ōyərō^h napši^y ləḥorəgi^ym

For I have heard a voice like (that of) one writhing in childbirth, distress like one giving birth to her first child: the voice of the daughter of Zion gasping for breath, **spreading out her palms**, (saying) “Woe is me, for my soul is thirsty because of murderers!”

In both passages, the gesture is accompanied by speech. In Isaiah 1:15, this is made clear by the parallelism: spreading the palms and hiding the eyes (the visual channel) are parallel to praying and refusing to listen (the auditory channel), the two channels being mutually complementary in the acts of praying and refusing to give attention. In Jeremiah 4:31, the daughter of Zion cries out while spreading her hands, “Woe is me, for my soul is thirsty because of murderers!” The first person in “I have heard” at the beginning of the verse is Yahweh (cf. verse 27); the daughter of Zion’s speech may thus be interpreted as a prayer, even though

Yahweh is not explicitly addressed in the quoted speech.¹⁹³ It is interesting that the daughter of Zion specifically mentions her thirst, much like the Psalmist in Psalm 143:6 (discussed above), who prays with spread hands and likens his soul to a thirsty land. This underscores the nature of the gesture in both cases as one of desperate pleading.

Mayer Gruber, in his book *Aspects of Nonverbal Communication in the Ancient Near East*, argues that the phrase *perás kappayim* in Jeremiah 4:31 should be translated “supplicate, plead.”¹⁹⁴ He makes a similar argument concerning the gesture phrase in Isaiah 1:15, though he retains the translation “when you spread your palms” in order to highlight features of the poetic style in this passage.¹⁹⁵ One of the main burdens of Gruber’s book is to determine when an expression describing a gesture is being used in its “primary” or literal sense (e.g. *perás kappayim* meaning “spread the palms”) and when it is being used in a “secondary” or idiomatic sense (e.g. *perás kappayim* meaning “supplicate, plead”).¹⁹⁶ Gruber describes the criteria that he uses to make this determination as follows:

The main criteria for determining that such words or expressions are employed in such a secondary sense are use with quotations without an intervening *verbum dicendi* and synonymous parallelism. The main criteria for determining that such

¹⁹³ Gruber, *Aspects of Nonverbal Communication*, 28-29, renders the gesture phrase in Jeremiah 4:31 as “supplicate, plead.” Generally, in *ibid.*, 25-32, he renders the idiom variously as “pray,” “supplicate,” or “plead”; the fact that he seems to avoid the meaning “pray” in Jeremiah 4:31 may indicate an implicit rejection of the idea that the context here is one of prayer. Other commentators on this passage generally do not address the issue of what kind of speech act the woman is engaging in. Most describe it, without explicit argumentation, as a kind of scream with no particular addressee. Some of these commentaries are almost humorous in their melodramatic portrayals. For example, Elmer A. Leslie, *Jeremiah Chronologically Arranged, Translated, and Interpreted* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1954), 56, writes: “But instead, there bursts from the tense lips of the daughter of Zion a disillusioned and despairing cry of anguish, like that of a woman in childbirth. Groaning, gasping for breath, she faints before her ruthless slaughterers.” A similar portrayal is given by Stanley Romaine Harper in *IB*, 5:843: “And the poem ends with dramatic and pitiful consistency, with the beloved of Yahweh spreading out her hands in desperate appeal, fainting before her murderers, and emitting that piercing cry to be heard again and again in these poems—the cry of anguish, as of a woman in travail. It is the death-shriek. The city has fallen.” However, it would seem odd for a “cry of anguish” or a “death-shriek” to consist of a coherent sentence of seven words, as the speech in Jeremiah 4:31 does. Overall, there is no real problem with taking the speech in this passage as a prayer; the expression “woe is me” occurs in prayer language, as in Psalm 120:5.

¹⁹⁴ Gruber, *Aspects of Nonverbal Communication*, 29.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 29-31.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 17-18.

expressions are employed in their primary sense are juxtaposition with *verbum dicendi*, synonymous parallelism, and juxtaposition with other words or expressions referring to specific gestures, postures, or symbolic acts.¹⁹⁷

Essentially, according to Gruber's methodology, a gesture phrase preceding direct speech without an intervening speech verb is to be understood as an idiomatic substitute for a speech verb.

It is important to recognize the possibility that gesture phrases in Northwest Semitic languages can be used idiomatically and that they may not necessarily imply the actual performance of a gesture act. However, some considerations cast doubt on the reliability of Gruber's criteria and even on the possibility of determining whether a gesture phrase is used in the "primary" or the "secondary" sense. First, the presence or absence of speech verbs and other markers of direct speech is relatively fluid in Northwest Semitic languages.¹⁹⁸ One often finds a description of a physical action followed by direct speech without an intervening speech verb. Examples of this may be found above in the list of examples of *nšw' ycd* in the context of an oath. Sometimes there is a speech verb intervening between the gesture phrase and direct speech (as in Deuteronomy 32:40-41; Ezekiel 20:5), but sometimes the speech verb is dispensed with (as in Ezekiel 36:7).¹⁹⁹ In Lamentations 2:15-16, a series of nonverbal actions (clapping the hands, hissing, shaking the head, opening the mouth, and gnashing the teeth) is described, and

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 19-20.

¹⁹⁸ This view differs somewhat from that of Cynthia L. Miller, *The Representation of Speech in Biblical Hebrew Narrative: A Linguistic Analysis* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996), 220: "Unframed direct speech, that is direct quotation without a quotative frame, is not common in Biblical Hebrew. It typically occurs within a conversation between two participants and, in such a context, the quotation often begins with *waw*." The examples given below are sufficient to demonstrate that "unframed" direct speech is not as rare or restricted as Miller claims. Many of these examples occur outside of Miller's corpus (Genesis through 2 Kings), though some are within her corpus. The fact that many of these examples occur in poetic contexts may be significant but is not sufficient reason to dismiss the phenomenon, since there are also many examples in prose. This phenomenon also occurs in other Northwest Semitic languages. For some examples in Ugaritic, see Wilfred G. E. Watson, "Abrupt Speech in Ugaritic Narrative Verse," *UF* 22 (1990): 415-20.

¹⁹⁹ Seely, "Raised Hand of God," 418-20, attempts to apply Gruber's criteria to these examples. The attempt is unfruitful, as the gesture idiom occurs both with and without verbs of speech within a single section of Ezekiel.

these actions are interspersed with two instances of direct speech. The first instance of direct speech occurs abruptly, without being introduced by a speech verb or other marker of direct speech, while the second instance is introduced by a speech verb, *'əmāru*^w “they say.” A similar example from poetry is found in Psalm 22:7-8, where a series of actions (mocking, sneering, and shaking the head) is followed by direct speech without any intervening speech verb. Descriptions of sending (*šōlah*) a message are often followed by direct speech without any intervening speech verb (Numbers 22:10-11; 1 Samuel 20:21; 2 Samuel 11:6; Isaiah 18:2; Jeremiah 49:14); examples with a speech verb are also common (Genesis 38:25; Numbers 21:21; etc.).²⁰⁰ Sending, like the gestures of lifting up the hand and spreading out the palms, is a nonverbal action that is commonly associated with the transmission of verbal messages; in all of these cases, the common omission of speech act verbs may be due to the fact that speech is expected and does not need to be introduced explicitly. Descriptions of speech acts, such as swearing, vowing, and naming a child, also show variation in the occurrence or omission of direct speech markers.²⁰¹ All of this makes it doubtful that the presence or absence of a speech verb can be counted on to determine whether a gesture phrase is to be taken literally or as an idiomatic expression for speech.

Second, Gruber’s criterion of synonymous parallelism depends on a somewhat subjective decision as to whether an instance of parallelism is synonymous or not. For example, in cases in

²⁰⁰ Miller, *Representation of Speech*, 352-63, discusses the verb *šōlah*, giving passing reference to its use preceding direct speech without *le'mor* “saying” (ibid., 352n67). Miller treats *šōlah* as if it were a speech verb, on a par with the verbs “swear,” “tell,” “ask,” “command,” and “speak” (ibid., 340). However, the verb *šōlah* denotes a physical action and not a form of speaking, and its use in direct juxtaposition with quoted speech is therefore worthy of note in the present discussion.

²⁰¹ Swearing and vowing: contrast Psalm 132:2-5 (without a speech verb); Genesis 28:20; Numbers 21:2; Judges 11:30; 1 Samuel 1:11; 2 Samuel 15:8 (with a speech verb). Naming a child: contrast 1 Samuel 1:20 (without a speech verb); 1 Samuel 4:21 (with a speech verb). Additional examples of various actions followed by direct speech without an intervening speech verb include Numbers 23:7 (leading a person); Isaiah 3:6 (taking hold of a person); Isaiah 14:8 (rejoicing); Jeremiah 6:17 (setting watchmen); Jeremiah 20:10 (watching for a person to stumble); Jeremiah 49:4 (trusting in treasures); Psalm 2:2-3 (taking counsel); Psalm 105:14-15; 1 Chronicles 16:21-22 (reproving kings); Job 4:16-17; 33:8-9 (hearing a voice); Job 8:18 (denying a person); Job 15:23 (wandering). This is not an exhaustive list.

which “prayer/to pray” is parallel to “lift up the palms” (Psalm 141:2) or “spread out the palms” (Isaiah 1:15), it would be possible to interpret the gesture phrase as synonymous with the verb “pray” (as Gruber does²⁰²) and thus to conclude that the gesture phrase is used in its secondary or idiomatic sense. However, it is at least equally possible that the gesture phrase is complementary to the verb “pray,” just as hiding the eyes and refusing to listen are mutually complementary in Isaiah 1:15, as discussed above. The fact that two words or phrases are parallel to each other does not prove that they are synonymous (cf., as just one among many possible examples, the parallelism of “sun” and “moon” in Psalms 104:19; 121:6).

Third, in Isaiah 1:15, aspects of the context make it clear that the gesture of spreading out the palms is to be understood literally, as a physical act and not as a mere idiomatic description of prayer. Yahweh averts his eyes, not just his ears, and the fact that the hands are described as full of blood implies that the hands are actually spread. This suggests that the gesture of spreading the palms in prayer was a physical reality, at least in Isaiah’s time (ca. 720 BCE). In Jeremiah 4:31, evidence of the physicality of spreading of the palms is absent; however, such an interpretation is not impossible.

In general, as far as the present study goes, the combined witness of textual and iconographic data makes it reasonably certain that the gestures discussed were an actual part of Northwest Semitic ritual practice in the time periods that are covered. While gesture phrases may be used idiomatically in some cases, it is impossible to locate such idiomatic usages with certainty; we have therefore avoided interpreting gesture phrases as if they were speech verbs. However, regardless of whether the points raised by Gruber can be substantiated in any given case, it is important to exercise caution when drawing inductive conclusions about ritual practice from any single textual passage, keeping in mind the possibility of gesture phrases being used in

²⁰² Gruber, *Aspects of Nonverbal Communication*, 26-27, 29-31.

a secondary or purely idiomatic sense. We have tried to reduce the margin of error as much as possible by using a comprehensive and systematic approach, thus focusing on clusters of examples rather than on isolated cases, and by presenting and evaluating various interpretive options.

2.2.24. *rəmɔʰ yɔd* “Of the Hand, Be High”

There are two main contextual types in which the basic gesture phrase *rəmɔʰ yɔd* “of the hand, be high” occurs. The first of these is that of destruction or exertion of supernatural power. There are two examples, both from the Hebrew Bible. The full gesture phrase in this context is *rəmɔʰ yɔd ʿal-T* “of the hand, be high against T.”

Isaiah 26:11 YHWH **rəmɔʰ yɔdəkɔ** bal-yeh^εzɔyu^wn yeh^εzu^w wəyebɔʃu^w qinʾat-ʿɔm ʾap-
ʿeʃ ʃɔrɛ^ykɔ toʾkəlem

Yahweh, **your hand is high**, but they do not see; let them see and be ashamed at (your) zeal on behalf of (your) people; let the fire reserved for your adversaries consume them.

Micah 5:8 **tɔrom yɔdəkɔ ʿal-ʃɔrɛ^ykɔ** wəkəl-ʾoyəbɛ^ykɔ yikkɔretu^w

May your hand be high against your adversaries; as for all your enemies, may they be cut off.

The majority of translators render the preposition *ʿal* in Micah 5:8 as “over.”²⁰³ However, some render the preposition here as “against.”²⁰⁴ The latter translation is adopted here, since it accords with how the preposition is used with other gesture idioms in this hostile context (see discussions above under *heni^yp yɔd* and *nɔʃɔʰ yɔd*).

²⁰³ Vulgate (*super*), NIV, RSV, NRSV, NJB, several major French translations (*sur*), and the Italian Sacra Biblia Nuova Riveduta (*sopra*). The NIV has an expansive translation, “Your hand will be lifted up in triumph over your enemies”; the idea that the gesture is a sign of triumph rules out the translation of the preposition as “against,” since triumph takes place when the combat is finished. The symbolism of this gesture will be discussed in chapter 5.

²⁰⁴ Septuagint (hostile *epi* plus accusative), German Einheitsübersetzung (*gegen*), and the Italian Nuova Diodati (*contro*).

In both passages, destructive effects are associated with the gesture through poetic parallelism. These effects include fire consuming the Agent’s adversaries (Isaiah 26:11) and the adversaries being cut off (Micah 5:8). In Isaiah 26:11, the Agent of the gesture is Yahweh. In Micah 5:8, the Agent, who is the referent of the second-person pronouns, appears to be “the remnant of Jacob” (verses 6-7), although the referents of the various pronouns seem to vary within this poem in Micah 5.²⁰⁵ Here the remnant is viewed as being empowered by Yahweh; nearby, in verse 6, the remnant is likened to “dew from Yahweh...which does not wait for man.” These aspects of the context are in harmony with other examples of the gesture of destruction or exertion of supernatural power.

The basic gesture phrase *rəmō^h yōd*, without any adverbial, also occurs in non-ritual contexts, figuratively describing defiant action in the sight of a higher authority.

- Exodus 14:8 wayḥazzeq YHWH ’et-leb par’o^h melek miṣrayim wayyirdop ’aḥ^arey bāne^y yiśrō’el u^wbāne^y yiśrō’el yoṣə’i^ym **bəyōd rəmō^h**
 Yahweh hardened the heart of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, and he pursued after the children of Israel as the children of Israel were going out **with a high hand**.
- Numbers 15:30 wəhannepēš ’ašer-ta’āšē^h **bəyōd rəmō^h** min-hō’ ezrōḥ u^wmin-hagger ’et-YHWH hu^w’ mēgaddep wənikrəto^h hannepēš hahi^w’ miqqereb ’ammōh
 As for the soul that does (it) **with a high hand**, whether a native or a sojourner, it is Yahweh that he is blaspheming; that soul shall be cut off from its people.
- Numbers 33:3 wayyis’u^w mera’ mōses baḥodeš ḥōri’šo^wn baḥ^amiššō^h ’ōsōr yo^wm laḥodeš ḥōri’šo^wn mimmōḥ^ṛrat happesaḥ yōṣə’u^w bāne^y-yiśrō’el **bəyōd rəmō^h** lə’ē^yne^y kōl-miṣrōyim
 They journeyed from Ramses in the first month, on the fifteenth day of the first month, on the day after Passover; the children of Israel went out **with a high hand** in the sight of all Egypt.

²⁰⁵ Gregory Mobley in *New Oxford Annotated Bible*, Hebrew Bible, 1331, labels his note to verses 6-8 as “Israel gains the upper hand.” In verse 1, the second-person masculine pronoun refers to the town of Bethlehem, and the remnant of Jacob is referred to in the third person in verses 6-7.

Deuteronomy 32:27 lu^wle^y ka[‘]as[’]o^wyeb[’]’og^wr pən-yənakkəru^w šəre^ymo^w pən-yo[’]məru^w
yəde^ynu^w rəmō^h wəlo[’] YHWH pə[‘]al kəl-zo[’]t

If I had not feared (their) enemy’s provocation, lest their adversaries misunderstand, lest they say, “**Our hand is high**; it is not Yahweh who did all this.”²⁰⁶

In the first three of these four occurrences, actions are said to be done *bəyōd rəmō^h* “with a high hand.” The repetition of this phrase seems to indicate that it has a formulaic character, perhaps referring to the intentionality or purposely defiant nature of an action. In any case, the phrase in this context does not appear to describe a ritual gesture, since it is not associated with a performative act, nor does it produce a magical effect.

2.2.25. *rəmō^h yəmi^yn* “Of the Right Hand, Be High”

The phrase *rəmō^h yəmi^yn* “of the right hand, be high” occurs once, in Psalm 89:14, in a context that is very similar to Isaiah 26:11 and Micah 5:8, where *rəmō^h yōd* “of the hand, be high” is used.

Psalm 89:14 ləkō zəro^{wa[‘]} ‘im-gəbu^wrō^h tō[‘]oz yōdəkō **təru^wm yəmi^ynəkō**
 You have a mighty arm; your hand is strong, **your right hand high**.

The Agent of the gesture phrase, who is addressed in this Psalm, is Yahweh. The preceding verses recount some of the mythological deeds of Yahweh: ruling and calming the sea (verse 10), crushing Rahab (verse 11), scattering enemies (verse 11), and creating the earth (verses 12-13).

²⁰⁶ NIV, RSV, and NRSV “Our hand is triumphant” or similar, NJB “We have got the upper hand,” Nouvelle Edition Geneve (1979) *Notre main a été puissante*, La nuova Diodati (1991) *La nostra mano ha trionfato*, all implying that the enemy is (hypothetically) holding its hand high over Israel. However, it is also possible to understand this as defiance against Yahweh; cf. Numbers 15:30, also quoted above. LXX *hē cheir hēmōn hē hupsēlē kai ouchi kurios epoiēsen tauta panta* and Vulgate *manus nostra excelsa et non Dominus fecit haec omnia* both mean “our high hand and not the Lord did all these things,” and La Sacra Bibbia Nuova Riveduta (1994) similarly has *È stata la nostra potente mano che ha fatto tutto questo, e non il SIGNORE*. However, these do not accurately reflect the Hebrew, because the verb *pə[‘]al* is masculine to agree with Yahweh, not feminine to agree with *yōd*.

The mention of scattering enemies, in particular, is similar to Isaiah 26:11 and Micah 5:8, in which adversaries or enemies are said to have fire reserved for them and to be cut off. In addition, the mention of a mighty arm and a strong hand recalls the frequently repeated phrase used to describe the means by which Yahweh accomplishes supernatural deeds, *bəyad h^azōqō^h u^wbizro^{wa} nətu^wyō^h* “with a strong hand and an extended arm” (see section 2.2.14 above). The context is therefore consistent with the contextual type of destruction or exertion of supernatural power.

2.2.26. *šittah kappayim* “Spread Forth the Palms”

The Piel verb *šittah* “spread forth” is used once in a gesture phrase in Psalm 88. The context is one of prayer.

Psalm 88:10 ‘e^yni^y dō[’]abō^h minni^y ‘oni^y qəro[’]ti^ykō YHWH bəkōl-yō^wm **šittah^{ti}** ‘elē^ykō
kappōy
 My eye is too weary for me because of affliction. I have called upon you,
 Yahweh, every day; **I have spread forth my palms** to you.

Here the basic gesture phrase occurs with a Target introduced by the preposition *’el-*. Since there are no other attestations of this basic gesture phrase to contrast with this one, the Target constituent is not needed in the full gesture phrase. The context here appears to be a desperate plea for help addressed to Yahweh; thus it may be compared with other idioms that use the Piel verb *peras*, namely *peras yodayim ’el-T* “spread out the hands toward T” and *peras kappayim* “spread out the palms.”

2.2.27. *šolah yad* “Stretch Out the Hand”

šolah yad “stretch out the hand” is the most frequently attested idiom referring to a hand gesture in the Hebrew Bible, occurring a few times in nonbiblical Northwest Semitic literature

also. In most of these occurrences, the idiom refers to a non-ritual, instrumental gesture. Paul Humbert argued that the basic phrase *šlāḥ yād* is entirely distinct from *nāṭāḥ yād* “extend the hand,” the former referring exclusively to mundane actions, and the latter referring exclusively to a divine gesture of judgment and destruction.²⁰⁷ We have shown that this analysis is too rigid in the case of *nāṭāḥ yād*. While it is true that the majority of occurrences of *šlāḥ yād* refer to mundane actions, there are a couple of attestations in the book of Exodus that clearly refer to the powerful, destructive gesture that is more frequently associated with *nāṭāḥ yād*. In these two instances, the full gesture phrase is the same as the basic gesture phrase, occurring without any additional constituents.

Exodus 3:20 **wəšlāḥti^y ’et-yōdi^y** wəhikke^yti^y ’et-miṣrayim bəkol niplə’otay ’ašer ’ε^εšē^h bəqirbo^w wə’ah^{are^y}-ken yəšallah ’etkəm

I will stretch out my hand and smite Egypt with all my wonders which I will do in his (Pharaoh’s) midst. After that, he will let you go.

Exodus 9:15 ki^y ’attā^h **šlāḥti^y ’et-yōdi^y** wə’ak ’o^wtəkə wə’et-’amməkə baddōber wattikkōhed min-hə’ōreṣ

For by now **I would have stretched out my hand** and smitten you and your people with pestilence, and you would have been wiped from the earth.²⁰⁸

Several indicators that the contextual type is that of destruction or exertion of supernatural power are found in these passages. The descriptive setting, which refers to bringing about the plagues in Egypt, compares very well with nearby instances of *nāṭāḥ yād* (cf., in particular, Exodus 7:5, discussed above under *nāṭāḥ yād*). In both Exodus 3:20 and 9:15, there is a result clause with the verb *hikkāḥ* “smite,” and an additional result clause occurs in Exodus 9:15 in which the Target is said to “be wiped from the earth” (*nikḥad min-hə’ōreṣ*). In both passages, Yahweh is the Agent of the gesture phrase.

²⁰⁷ Humbert, “Etendre la main,” 392-93.

²⁰⁸ On the verb forms, see GKC §106p, and cf. Propp, *Exodus 1-18*, 333.

To this point, we have discussed several different gesture phrases that occur in the contextual type of destruction or exertion of supernatural power. These phrases will be brought together and compared in chapter 3. Of these phrases, *nɔʔɔ^h yɔd* is the most frequently occurring by far, with sixteen occurrences in the pericope of the deliverance from Egypt and forty-three occurrences overall. One may question why *šɔlah yɔd* is used instead of *nɔʔɔ^h yɔd* in the passages just cited. The answer to this question may lie in the use of wordplay. In both Exodus 3:20 and 9:15, there are occurrences of the root *šlh* that are in close proximity to the gesture phrase *šɔlah yɔd*. In Exodus 3:20, Yahweh promises that after he stretches out his hand (*wəšɔlaḥti^y ʾet-yɔdi^y*), Pharaoh will let Israel go (*yəšallah*). The wordplay between the two verbs strengthens the logical connection between the acts that they denote: Yahweh’s act of *šlh* toward Pharaoh will bring about Pharaoh’s act of *šlh* toward the children of Israel. In each of the two verses leading up to Exodus 9:15, similar uses of the root *šlh* occur. Yahweh commands Moses to go before Pharaoh and order him to let Israel go (*šallah*), for Yahweh is sending (*šole^aḥ*) his plagues. Again, the wordplay between these verbs strengthens the logical connection between them: Pharaoh’s release of the children of Israel is the expected result of Yahweh’s sending of the plagues (or of the threat of his doing so), which is, in turn, presented as a result of the stretching-out of Yahweh’s hand. Both verse 14, which contains the warning about the plagues, and the ensuing verse, which contains the gesture phrase as the first main clause, begin with the conjunction *ki^y* “for,” further strengthening this logical connection between the verbs. Therefore, the desire to create a wordplay with the root *šlh* may be one motivation for the relatively rare use of *šɔlah yɔd* in these passages.

In one other passage, the basic gesture phrase *šɔlah yɔd* may be placed in this same contextual type of destruction or exertion of supernatural power:

2 Samuel 24:16 **wayyišlah yədo^w** hammal'ək **yəru^wšəla(y)im** ləšaḥ^{atəh} wayyinnəhem
 YHWH 'el-həro'ə^h wayyo'mer lammal'ək hammašhi^{yət} bə'om rab 'attə^h herəp
 yədəkə u^wmal'ak YHWH həyo^h 'im-goren hə^awarnə^h haybusi^y

The angel **stretched out his hand (against) Jerusalem** to destroy it, but Yahweh was moved to pity because of the calamity, and he said to the angel who was destroying the people, “Enough! Now put down your hand.” The angel of Yahweh was near the threshingfloor of Araunah the Jebusite.

The event described is also found in 1 Chronicles 21:16, and there the verb used for the angel's action is *nəṭə^h* instead of *šəlah*, suggesting that *šəlah yəd* here was thought to represent the supernatural destructive gesture that is most frequently associated with *nəṭə^h yəd* (see above under *nəṭə^h yəd*).

One possibility to consider is that the difference in gesture phrases in these two passages indicates a shift in the interpretation of the event. In 2 Samuel 1:14, similarly to this passage, the phrase *šəlah yəd* is followed by a Purpose clause with the verb *šihet* “destroy”:

2 Samuel 1:14 wayyo'mer 'elo^{yw} dəwid 'e^yk lo' yore'to **lišlə^aḥ yədəkə** ləšaḥet 'et-məši^{ya}ḥ
 YHWH

David said to him, “How is it that you were not afraid **to stretch out your hand** to destroy the anointed of Yahweh?”

The context in 2 Samuel 1:14 is not that of supernatural destruction but an individual, non-magical act of violence. This similarity might lead one to suspect that in 2 Samuel 24:16, the angel was perceived as stretching out his hand not in the gesture of supernatural destruction but to physically strike and kill individual inhabitants of Jerusalem.

However, a few considerations argue that, on the contrary, 2 Samuel 24:16 should be placed in the contextual type of destruction or exertion of supernatural power and not in the same category as 2 Samuel 1:14. First, one can point to several obvious contextual differences between

2 Samuel 1:14 and 24:16. In the former, an ordinary Amalekite is said to have “destroyed” a helpless victim (king Saul) with a weapon. In the latter, an angel sent from Yahweh stretches out his hand (no weapon is mentioned here, though the parallel version in 1 Chronicles 21:16 mentions the use of a sword) to destroy a whole city or people. In this connection, it may be mentioned that the verb for “destroy” in 2 Samuel 24:16 shows some textual variation. A few manuscripts have the Hiphil form *lhšhyt* in the Purpose clause,²⁰⁹ and all manuscripts use the Hiphil form in the second part of this verse: *wayyo`mer lammal`ok hammašhiyt bə`om* “he said to the angel who was destroying (Hiphil) the people.” The Hiphil form of *šht* is also the uniform reading of the parallel text in 1 Chronicles 21:15 (three occurrences). The use of the Hiphil form of the verb in one or both instances in 2 Samuel 24:16 slightly weakens the connection with 2 Samuel 1:14, where the Piel form is used, and shows similarity to Jeremiah 15:6, where the Hiphil form occurs in a result clause following *nəṭṭ^h yəd* in the context of divine judgments.²¹⁰

Second, the Target constituent in 2 Samuel 24:16 occurs as an unmarked adverbial. This is entirely unique among examples of the basic gesture phrase *šəlah yəd*. By contrast, the example in 2 Samuel 1:14 is contextually similar to a series of examples of *šəlah yəd* in 1 Samuel, and in these other examples, the Target is introduced by the preposition *bə*:

- 1 Samuel 24:7 wayyo`mer la`anošəw həli`lo^h lli^y meYHWH `im-`ε`ε^h `et-haddəbər hazze^h la`doni^y limši^yəḥ YHWH **lišlo^aḥ yədi^y bo^w** ki^y-məši^yəḥ YHWH hu^w
- He said to his men, “Yahweh forbid me! If I should do this thing to my lord, to the anointed of Yahweh, **to stretch out my hand against him, ...!** For he is the anointed of Yahweh.”
- 1 Samuel 24:11 hinne^h hayyo^wm hazze^h rə`u^w `e^ynə^yko `et `ašer-nəṭəṅko YHWH hayyo^wm bəyədi^y bammə`əro^h wə`omar lah^arəg^ako wattəḥəs `ələ^yko wə`omar **lo`-`əšlah yədi^y ba`doni^y** ki^y-məši^yəḥ YHWH hu^w

²⁰⁹ BHS, 555n16a.

²¹⁰ The significance of the textual variation between the Piel and Hiphil forms is only slight, since the Piel and Hiphil forms of this verb are virtually identical semantically. Both forms of the verb can be used in large-scale destructive contexts or to describe small-scale acts of violence. Cf. BDB, 1007-8.

Behold, this day your eyes have seen that Yahweh delivered you into my hand in the cave. One said to kill you, but (my eye) had pity for you, and I said, “**I will not stretch out my hand against my lord**, for he is the anointed of Yahweh.”

- 1 Samuel 26:9 wayyo'mer dōwid 'el-'abišay 'al-tašhi'tehu^w ki^y mi^y šōlah yōdo^w bimšiyaḥ YHWH wəniqqo^h
David said to Abishai, “Do not destroy him, for who **has stretched out his hand against the anointed of Yahweh** and been free of guilt?”
- 1 Samuel 26:11 ḥōli'lo^h lli^y meYHWH miššalo^{aḥ} yōdi^y bimšiyaḥ YHWH wə'atto^h qaḥ-no'
'et-haḥ^ani^yt 'ašer mēra 'ašoto^(y)w wə'et-šappaḥat hammayim wənel^ako^h llōnu^w
Yahweh forbid me **from stretching out my hand against the anointed of Yahweh!** Now, take the spear which is by his head and the water jar, and let us go away.”
- 1 Samuel 26:23 waYHWH yōši^yb lo'i^yš 'et-šidqōto^w wə'et-'munōto^w 'ašer nātōnəkō YHWH hayyo^wm bəyōd wəlo' 'ōbi^yti^y lišlo^{aḥ} yōdi^y bimšiyaḥ YHWH
Yahweh will recompense (each) man for his justice and faithfulness, as Yahweh delivered you into (my) hand today, but I would not **stretch out my hand against the anointed of Yahweh.**

There are several contextual similarities between these five examples, including the specification of the Target as the “anointed of Yahweh,” a term that refers to the king. The use of *bə* preceding the Target and the fact that the Target is the king suggest a link between *šōlah yōd* in these examples and the phrases *heriyim yōd bəT* and *nōšō' yōd bəT*, both of which are associated with the contextual type of rebellion against a king. More generally, *šōlah yōd bəT* denotes an act of violence against a king or other human Target, or an act of plunder when the Target is inanimate, in a series of passages in the book of Esther (Esther 2:21; 3:6; 6:2; 8:7; 9:2, 10, 15, 16). Similar uses of this phrase are found sporadically elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible (Genesis 37:22; Exodus 22:7, 10; Job 28:9; 30:24; Daniel 11:42; Nehemiah 13:21) and possibly in one broken passage in an Aramaic inscription from Zinjirli (Panammu I, *KAI* 214:25). In the Ugaritic Kirta epic, *šlh yd bT* (with an inanimate Target) describes a harmless act of reaching for an object (*KTU* 1.15 iv 24). In view of this distribution of phrase types, it is possible to propose that 2 Samuel 24:16 and

Exodus 3:20; 9:15 represent a unified contextual type with the full gesture phrase *šōlah yōd* (*adv*)*T* “stretch out the hand (against) T,” this being distinct from the contextual type of physical, usually violent action denoted by *šōlah yōd bəT* “stretch out the hand to/against T.”

Third, one can find some evidence for wordplay on the root *šlh* in and near 2 Samuel 24:16, suggesting a possible motivation for the use of *šōlah yōd* similar to that in Exodus 3:20 and 9:15, although the wordplay is not as obvious and compelling as it is in the Exodus passages. The root *šlh* is used in 2 Samuel 24:13, where the prophet Gad urges king David to choose between three punishments so that the prophet can bring word, says he, to “the one who sent me” (*šōlahi*). There does not appear to be any logical connection between this use of the verb *šōlah* and that in the gesture phrase three verses later. However, a semantic parallel for the root *šlh*, whose basic meaning is “send,” is found much closer to the gesture phrase in the root of the word *mal’ōk* “angel.” The root *l’k* meaning “send (a message)” is attested in Ugaritic, Arabic, and Ethiopic, and it may be that Hebrew speakers like the author of 2 Samuel 24 recognized this sense in relation to the word *mal’ōk*, which can have the mundane sense of “messenger” in addition to “angel,” even though there is no verb from the root *l’k* attested as yet in Hebrew.²¹¹ In 2 Samuel 24:16, the word *mal’ōk* is separated from *wayyišlah* “he stretched out” by only one short word, *yōd* “his hand.” In the parallel passage in 1 Chronicles 21:15-16, the verb *šōlah* again occurs in close proximity to the word *mal’ōk* (*wayyišlah hō’lohi m mal’ōk* “God sent an angel,” verse 15), but the description of the angel’s gesture uses a different verb (*nōṭṭh*, verse 16), which is separated from the word *mal’ōk* by nine words. Thus *mal’ōk* occurs in close proximity to *šōlah* but is quite far removed from *nōṭṭh*. It is therefore possible that the author of 2 Samuel 24 chose the verb *šōlah* and placed it in close proximity to *mal’ōk* specifically in order to create a wordplay. 2 Samuel 24:16 and 1 Chronicles 21:15-16 are the only two instances in which a

²¹¹ BDB, 521; *DULAT*, 2:486-87.

mal'ək “angel” is the Agent of an extended hand gesture in this contextual type, and it could be that this, too, factors into the author’s decision to employ a wordplay with the verb *šəlah*.

In four other passages, the basic gesture phrase *šəlah yəd* is used in a violent context that might be the same as that of destruction or exertion of supernatural power. In two of these passages (Exodus 24:11; Job 1:11), there is a Target that occurs before the basic gesture phrase and that is introduced by the preposition *’el-* “toward, against.”

- Exodus 24:11 **wə’el-’ašī’le^y bəne^y yiśrə’el lo’ šəlah yədo^w** wayyeh^εzu^w ’et-hə’elohi^ym wayyo’kəlu^w wayyištu^w
- He did not stretch out his hand against the chiefs of the children of Israel; they saw God and then ate and drank.**
- Job 1:11 **wə’u^wləm šəlah-nə’ yədəko** wəga’ bəkəl-’ašer-lo^w ’im-lo’ ’al-pəne^yko yəbər^akəkkə
- But **stretch out your hand** and strike everything that he has. If he does not curse you to your face, ...!
- Job 1:12 wayyo’mer YHWH ’el-haššəṭən hinne^h kəl-’ašer-lo^w bəyədəko raq **’el^yw ’al-tišlah yədəko** wayyešə’ haššəṭən me’im pəne^y YHWH
- Yahweh said to Satan, “Behold, everything that he has is in your hand. Only **against him do not stretch out your hand**. Then Satan went out from the presence of Yahweh.
- Job 2:5 ’u^wləm **šəlah-nə’ yədəko** wəga’ ’el-’ašmo^w wə’el-bəšəro^w ’im-lo’ ’el-pəne^yko yəbər^akəkkə
- But **stretch out your hand** and strike his bone and his flesh. If he does not curse you to your face, ...!

Although the descriptive setting is small-scale, with just a single individual as the Target, the effect of the gesture is conceived of as both violent and supernatural. In the passages in Job, there is a result clause with the verb *nəga* “touch,” here apparently in the sense of “strike” in a supernatural way.²¹²

²¹² BDB, 619, definition 2.

The use of the preposition *'el-* to introduce the Target in Exodus 24:11 and Job 1:11 would seem to contrast with the occurrence of the Target as an unmarked adverbial in 2 Samuel 24:16. Elsewhere, *šׁolah yׁod 'el-T* denotes a gesture of physical, violent action against a human Target (Genesis 22:12; 2 Samuel 18:12) or neutral action on an inanimate Target (1 Samuel 17:49; Ezekiel 10:7). However, the phrase in the passages quoted above is not necessarily incompatible with *šׁolah yׁod (adv)T* in 2 Samuel 24:16, since the Target constituent is placed before the verb in these examples, unlike the example in 2 Samuel 24:16. One could propose that *'el-T šׁolah yׁod* (with the Target constituent fronted before the verb and introduced by the preposition *'el-*) is equivalent to *šׁolah yׁod (adv)T* and distinct from *šׁolah yׁod 'el-T* (with the Target constituent occurring after the verb). In one of the examples (Job 1:12), the adverbial Target is pronominal, which necessitates the use of a preposition.

In three of the four passages (all except Job 1:12), the Agent of the gesture phrase is God. In Job 1:12, God grants the role of performing this gesture to Satan; the fact that verse 11 describes Satan urging God to perform this gesture makes it clear that Satan, although acting as Agent of the gesture, does so as a representative of God. Again, this fits generally with the contextual type of destruction or exertion of supernatural power.

However, it is also possible to view these four examples in a different light. In some other passages, the phrase *šׁolah yׁod* may be understood simply as a prelude to physical contact. One might compare Jeremiah 1:9, where Yahweh stretches out his hand to touch (*higga* ') the prophet Jeremiah's mouth, and Ezekiel 10:7, where a cherub stretches out its hand to (*'el-*) a fire to take up some of it. In similar fashion, the stretching-out of the hand in the four passages quoted above may be considered a prelude to contact (which is here viewed as harmful) rather than a self-sufficient means of bringing about harm. One notes, also, that there does not appear to be any

wordplay that would motivate the use of the verb *šḥlah* as in the passages discussed previously. Therefore, it seems best to leave open the possibility that *šḥlah yḥd* in Exodus 24:11 and Job 1:11, 12; 2:5 is not the gesture of destruction or exertion of supernatural power but is to be placed in a separate category.

In one additional passage in the Psalms, it would be possible to interpret the context as one of destruction or exertion of supernatural power.

Psalm 138:7 'im-'elek bəqerəb šərḥ^h təḥayyeni^y 'al 'ap 'oyəbay **tišlah yḥdek**²¹³
wəto^wšī^y'eni^y yəmi^ynekə

If I walk in the midst of affliction, you will let me live; because of the wrath of my enemies, **you will stretch out your hand**, you will save me with your right hand.²¹⁴

The Agent of the gesture here is Yahweh. This passage might be compared with Psalm 10:12, where the phrase *nəšḥ' yḥd* is used. Both passages refer to God intervening in the Psalmist's behalf. However, unlike Psalm 10:12, the context of Psalm 138:7 does not support the idea that the gesture is associated with the destruction of wicked enemies. In the latter passage, the gesture phrase is parallel to the verb *howšī^{ya}* "save," and it is possible to view the gesture as a reaching-out of the hand toward the Psalmist to rescue him from a harmful situation.²¹⁵ The prepositional phrase 'al ap 'oyəbay may be translated "against the wrath of my enemies" and understood as the Target constituent going with *tišlah yḥdek*, or it may be translated "because of the wrath of my enemies" and understood to be outside of the gesture phrase proper. Some Hebrew manuscripts reverse the order of the words 'al and 'ap, giving the relatively unambiguous reading "even

²¹³ Many Hebrew manuscripts have plural "hands" (consonantal *ydyk*). It would be difficult to distinguish the singular form of this word from the plural in writing from dictation, since the pronunciation of the word with the pronoun suffix is the same in either case. Here we accept the singular form attested in Codex Leningradensis.

²¹⁴ For the structure of the final clause, with the verb as second person masculine singular and "right hand" as an unmarked adverbial, see Dahood, *Psalms III*, 275, 281.

²¹⁵ Dahood, *Psalms III*, 281, is explicitly influenced by Humbert in interpreting *šḥlah yḥd* in a hostile sense in Psalm 138:7; Dahood accordingly translates *wəto^wšī^y'eni^y* in this verse as "give me victory."

against my enemies.” If the reading of Codex Leningradensis is retained, it seems to make slightly better sense to understand Yahweh as acting “because of the wrath” than to imagine him acting “against the wrath.” The passage would then contain no adverbial phrase that would help to determine the contextual type of the gesture idiom here. Given the lack of unequivocal supporting contextual clues, it is wise to resist grouping this passage with examples of *šalah yad* in the context of destruction or exertion of supernatural power.

There are other attestations of the basic gesture phrase *šalah yad* in the Hebrew Bible and in inscriptions.²¹⁶ With regard to these, the conclusions of Humbert are applicable, namely that *šalah yad* denotes a non-ritual gesture of reaching out to make contact with a person or object. In some cases, this categorization as “non-ritual” could be challenged on various grounds, since the gesture may occur in a ritual setting or may bring about supernatural or social change. For example, 1 Kings 13:4 and 1 Chronicles 13:9-10 both describe acts of stretching out the hand in a ritual setting (temple sacrifice and a religious procession respectively), and both have striking supernatural consequences for the one performing the gesture (the withering of Jeroboam’s hand in the first case and the sudden death of Uzzah in the second case). However, in neither case does the stretching-out of the hand appear to be directly linked with the ritual itself, nor is the supernatural effect part of the gesture’s purpose; the gesture in one case accompanies a command to seize a prophet, and in the other case its purpose is to steady the ark of the covenant as the oxen carrying it stumble. In other cases, stretching out the hand may immediately precede a ritual act, for example in Jeremiah 1:9, which describes Yahweh stretching out his hand before touching Jeremiah’s lips. Here it is the touching of the lips that is the central ritual act; the stretching-out of the hand appears to be only an incidental motion leading to contact. In

²¹⁶ For a virtually exhaustive list of examples in the Hebrew Bible, one may consult Humbert, “Etendre la main.” An additional example is found in a Phoenician inscription from Zinjirli, Kilamuwa I (KAI 24:6).

accordance with the scope and aims of this study, we include only those examples of stretching out the hand which are both directly and purposely linked to a ritual effect.

2.2.28. *tɔmak* “Hold”

The verb *tɔmak* “hold” is used in several gesture phrases referring to clasping hands with a Target. In some examples, this clasping of hands may be associated with entering into a covenant relationship. In a Phoenician inscription of king Kilamuwa from Zinjirli, the king refers to having “held” a subject people “by the hand.” The full gesture phrase in this example is *tmk T lyd* “hold T by the hand.”

Kilamuwa I, *KAI* w'nk **tmkt mškbm lyd** whmt št nbš km nbš ytm b'm
24:13

I held the MŠKBM by the hand, and they felt (toward me) as an orphan feels toward a mother.

The interpretation of this passage is ambiguous in a number of respects. It is not certain that a concrete gesture is referred to here; the holding by the hand may be metaphorical, although a literal act of clasping hands with individual members of the group should not be excluded (cf. 2 Samuel 15:5, in which Absalom courts the favor of people by grasping and kissing them). In any case, the gesture phrase is associated with a transition in the relationship between the Agent and the Target, as the MŠKBM finally view the king in terms of a surrogate kinship relationship, that of an orphan to his adopted mother. It is unfortunate that the ambiguous aspects of this passage cannot be resolved by comparison with other examples in Phoenician, as no such examples have come to light.

Several passages in the Bible, specifically in Deutero-Isaiah and in the Psalms, describe a covenant-making gesture involving the verb *tamak*. In one example, the full gesture phrase is *tamak T biʼmiʼn šedeq A* “hold T by the saving right hand of A.”

Isaiah 41:10 ʼal-tiʼrəʼ kiʼ ʼimməkə-ʼoniʼ ʼal-tištəʼ kiʼ-ʼaniʼ ʼloheʼkə ʼimmaštiʼkə ʼap-
 ʼazartiʼkə ʼap-**təmaktiʼkə biʼmiʼn šidqiʼ**
 Do not fear, for I am with you; do not gaze about fearfully, for I am your
 God; I have strengthened you, I have helped you, **I have held you with my
 saving right hand.**

The contextual type here is that of the covenant-making handclasp. The gesture phrase occurs in close proximity to, and in the same descriptive setting as, other idioms for the same gesture (Isaiah 41:9, 13). Note especially Isaiah 41:13, where the idiom is *heḥʼziʼq yəmiʼn T*. It may be noted that these two idioms, taken together, indicate that the two participants are facing each other, not side-by-side, since the right hands of both participants are joined. This is discussed further in chapter 4, where iconographic evidence is also considered. The gesture phrase here is parallel to the verbs meaning “strengthen” and “help,” and the Agent is Yahweh, who performs the gesture to his servant.

In two passages, one from Isaiah and the other from the Psalms, the full gesture phrase is *tamak bəT* “hold T.”

Isaiah 42:1 hen ʼabdiʼ ʼ**ətmək-boʼ** bəḥiʼriʼ rəṣətəʼh napšiʼ nətattiʼ ruʼwḥiʼ ʼələʼw mišpəṭ
 laggoʼyim yoʼwšiʼʼ
 Behold my servant, **whom I have held**; my chosen, whom my soul favors. I
 have put my spirit upon him; he will pronounce judgment upon the nations.

Psalms 41:13 waʼaniʼ bətummiʼ **təmaktə biʼ** wattaṣṣiʼbeniʼ ləpəneʼkə lə ʼoʼwləm
 As for me in my integrity, **you have held me**; you have set me before you
 forever.

Elements of the context in these two passages are similar. In both passages, Yahweh performs the gesture toward a human whom Yahweh regards with special favor (*rʕṣəṭō^h napšī^v* “whom my soul favors,” Isaiah 42:1; *ḥəpəṣṭō bī^v* “you delight in me,” Psalm 41:12).

In neither of these passages is there explicit mention of the hand. However, the use of the Agent’s hand (the Sender) is, of course, implied in the action of holding, and comparison with other examples sharing the same contextual type shows that the Target’s hand occupies the role of Receiver. Another idiom for this gesture in which the hand is explicit, *heḥ^εzi^vq bəyad T*, occurs in close proximity to Isaiah 42:1, in verse 6.

Commentators differ on the interpretation of the verbs in Psalm 41:13. Dahood interprets the verb *təmakṭō* “you have held” as a “precativ perfect” and translates both verbs in this passage with English imperatives: “But I in my integrity—grasp me / And set me before you forever!”²¹⁷ Eaton translates both verbs with the English present tense, as if they expressed a general and lasting state of affairs: “while as for me, in my integrity you hold me fast, and set me before your face forever.”²¹⁸ Both of these interpretations reflect the commentators’ understandings of the theology expressed in this and similar passages in the Psalms. Dahood understands the Psalmist to be expressing a hope of eventual assumption into heaven by means of a handclasp, while Eaton understands these Psalms to be expressing a form of divine favor that is constantly enjoyed by the king.²¹⁹ However, the *waw*-consecutive prefix conjugation form in the second colon (as vocalized in the Masoretic tradition) has led others to assume that the reference is to concrete events that occurred in past time.²²⁰ In contrast to this variation in the

²¹⁷ Dahood, *Psalms I*, 20, 249, 252-53.

²¹⁸ Eaton, *Psalms*, 176-77. Cf. KJV, NIV.

²¹⁹ Dahood, *Psalms I*, xxxvi, 33, 146, 252-53, 301-2; Dahood, *Psalms II*, 85, 100, 194; Eaton, *Kingship and the Psalms*, 143-44, 157; Eaton, *Psalms*, 177, 236, 267.

²²⁰ RSV, NRSV. The Septuagint and the Vulgate likewise interpret the verbs in this verse as past tense (aorist in the Greek, perfect in the Latin).

interpretation of Psalm 41:13, most translations uniformly render the prefix conjugation verb *'etmāk* in Isaiah 42:1 as a present tense verb: “I uphold” or similar.²²¹ Yet this verb can also be interpreted as an archaic preterite verb form. The interpretation of the time reference of verb forms in Hebrew poetry, which is necessary in order to render these verbs in English translation, is notoriously knotty. Though certainty on this point is not possible, one can suggest that the forms of *tōmak* in both of these passages, rather than expressing a wish or a general state of affairs, express a previous, concrete, ritual act. Thus, consistently with other descriptions of handclasps that occur in poetic contexts and are quoted in this chapter, we translate these verbs with the English past perfect: “I have held,” “you have held.”

There is one passage in Papyrus Amherst 63, the Aramaic text in Demotic script, in which a gesture phrase similar to that in Isaiah 42 and Psalm 41 may occur. Here, according to the reading of Steiner and Nims, the full gesture phrase is *tmk ymyn T* “hold the right hand of T.” Unfortunately, the papyrus at this point is very fragmentary. The legible portions read as follows:

pAmherst 63 vi (16) [...]y'myn'k . [...]k . b's's'rm' . by't'k' . (17) [...] . t[...] . 'r'wyk' .
 16-17 k's'k' . [...]b'wn .
 (16) [...] **your right hand**; [...] with peace, in your hand (17) [...] upon you, your cup [...].

In the first lacuna, Steiner and Nims restore [... *e'tm']k y'myn'k* “[**I will support**]t **your right (hand)**.”²²² In a subsequent article, Vleeming and Wesselius present a different reading: [...]*by'myn'k* “[you will place ...] **in your right hand**.”²²³ Concerning the sign immediately preceding the word *y'myn'k* “right hand,” which is practically illegible in the photograph published by Steiner and Nims, neither pair of scholars gives a specific reason for the restoration

²²¹ KJV, NIV, RSV, NJB, etc. Cf. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55*, 208.

²²² Steiner and Nims, “You Can’t Offer Your Sacrifice and Eat It Too,” 94, 96.

²²³ Vleeming and Wesselius, “Betel the Saviour,” 116-17.

as *k* or *b*; one can only assume that both restorations are made solely on the basis of conjecture.²²⁴ The remainder of these two lines is also interpreted quite differently by Steiner and Nims and by Vleeming and Wesselius.²²⁵ As is typically the case with this papyrus, the poor condition of the papyrus and the fact that its content is far from perfectly understood give rise to widely divergent interpretations. Again, we are unable to regard this example as more than an interesting possible occurrence of a gesture phrase.

In one example of the verb *tamak* in the biblical book of Exodus, the gesture of grasping the hand has an instrumental rather than a ritual function, although it occurs in a context with ritual elements. Here two men hold up the hands of Moses while the latter performs a supernaturally destructive ritual gesture.

Exodus 17:12 wi^yde^y moš^h kəbedi^ym wayyiqḥu^w- 'ēben wayyōšī^ymu^w taḥtō^yw wayyešeb
 'ōlē^yhō wə' ah^aron wəḥu^wr **təmaku^w bəyōdō^yw** mizze^h 'ēḥōd u^wmizze^h 'ēḥōd
 wayhi^y yōdō^yw 'ēmu^wnō^h 'ad-bo' haššōmēš

Moses' hands being heavy, they took a stone and put (it) under him, he sat on it, and Aaron and Hur **held his hands**, one on one side and the other on the other side, so that his hands were steady until sunset.

The phrase used here is *tamak bəyōd T* “hold the hand of T.” It is plain from the descriptive setting and from the participant format (Aaron and Hur as Agents, Moses as Target) that the gesture here is quite different from the ritual gesture performed by Yahweh in Deutero-Isaiah and the Psalms.

²²⁴ Steiner and Nims give no comment on their reasons for restoring this letter as *k*. The only remark given by Vleeming and Wesselius is that “the photograph seems not to exclude the latter reading” (i.e., that of Steiner and Nims) (Vleeming and Wesselius, “Betel the Saviour,” 134).

²²⁵ Steiner and Nims translate these lines as “[I will suppor]t your right (hand). I will bless you with peace/well-being; Your house...upon you...” (Steiner and Nims, “Polemical Poem,” 96). Vleeming and Wesselius translate as “[you will place ...] in your right hand, with the entire land in peace in your hand. / [... bless]ing will [be] on you, [good]nesses covered you” (Vleeming and Wesselius, “Betel the Saviour,” 117).

2.2.29. *təməkə^h yəmī^yn* “Of the Right Hand, Hold”

A gesture phrase using the verb *təmək* but belonging to the second grammatical type of gesture phrase (in which the Sender is the subject of the verb) is found in Psalm 63. The contextual type is that of the ritual handclasp performed by Yahweh to his chosen, and the full gesture phrase is *təməkə^h yəmī^yn bəT* “of the right hand, hold T.”

Psalm 63:9 dəbəqə^h napšī^y ’aḥ^arē^ykə bi^y **təməkə^h yəmī^ynəkə**
My soul clung to you, **your right hand held** me.

As in Isaiah 42:1 and Psalm 41:13, the Agent of the gesture here is Yahweh, and the Target is a human whom Yahweh regards with special favor. The context in this Psalm refers to Yahweh helping and protecting the Target. This is particularly clear in the preceding verse: “For you have been a help for me, I rejoiced in the shadow of your wings.” Psalm 63:10-11 describes the destruction of the Psalmist’s enemies, implying that this is a result of Yahweh’s help and protection, which compares well with Psalm 41:12-13.

2.2.30. *tənu^wpat yəd* “Elevating of the Hand”

In a final pair of examples of the gesture of destruction or exertion of supernatural power, a phrase including a verbal noun is used to describe the action of raising the hand.

Isaiah 19:16 bayyo^wm hahu^w’ yihyē^h miṣrayim kannōšī^ym wəḥōrad u^wpəḥad mippəne^y
tənu^wpat yad-YHWH ṣəbə’o^wt ’ašer-hu^w’ meni^yp ‘ələ^yw
In that day Egypt will be like women. It will tremble and fear before **the elevating of Yahweh Sabaoth’s hand** that he elevates against it.

Isaiah 30:31-32 (31) ki^y-miqqo^wl YHWH yeḥat ’aššu^wr baššebet yakke^h (32) wəḥōyō^h kol
ma^abar maṭṭe^h mu^wsəḏə^h ’ašer yōni^yaḥ YHWH ‘ələ^yw bətuppi^ym
u^wbəkinnoro^wt u^wbəmilḥ^amo^wt **tənu^wpə^h** nilḥam-bəm

(31) For at the voice of Yahweh Assyria will be dismayed, (as) he (Yahweh) strikes with a rod. (32) Every stroke of the appointed rod which Yahweh will lay upon him will be to (the music of) timbrels and lyres; in battles of **elevating (the hand)** he will fight against them.

In Isaiah 19:16, the phrase *tənu^wpat yad-YHWH šəbō 'o^wt* “the elevating of Yahweh Sabaoth’s hand” is a fine example of the fourth grammatical type of gesture phrase, as it consists of a verbal noun in construct with a noun phrase denoting the Sender. The gesture phrase in the explanatory clause at the end of this verse, *'ašer-hu^w' meni^yp 'əlō^yw* “that he elevates against it,” belongs to the first grammatical type and has already been discussed above under *heni^yp yəd*. The fact that this last clause is directly linked with the expression *tənu^wpat yəd* makes it clear that the two phrases belong to the same contextual type and are synonymous.

The gesture phrase in Isaiah 30:31-32 is somewhat harder to detect, since the Sender is elided, leaving only the verbal noun *tənu^wpō^h* “elevating.” Here the verbal noun is the second part of a construct: *milḥ^amo^wt tənu^wpō^h* “battles of elevating (the hand).” This makes explicit the link between the gesture of elevating the hand and the context of battle. One may also note the proximity of this passage to the baring of the arm with its supernatural effects in Isaiah 30:30 (discussed in section 2.2.6 above).

2.3. Phrases Referring to the Cessation or Redirection of a Gesture

2.3.1. *heni^yaḥ yəd* “Rest the Hand”

The phrase *heni^yaḥ yəd* “rest the hand” is used to describe the cessation of a ritual gesture of raising the hand (*heri^ym yəd*) in one passage, Exodus 17:11.

Exodus 17:11 wəhəyɔ^h ka^{ʼa}ʃer yɔri^ym moʃe^h yɔdo^w wəgɔbar yiʃrɔ^ʼel wəka^{ʼa}ʃer **yɔni^{ʼa}h**
yɔdo^w wəgɔbar ʼamɔleq
 Whenever Moses would raise his hand, Israel would prevail, but when **he**
would rest his hand, Amalek would prevail.

Here the resting of the hand is not a purposeful way of ceasing the upraised hand gesture but a failure of ability to maintain the gesture.

2.3.2. *hirpɔ^h yɔd* “Put Down the Hand”

In two passages describing the same event (2 Samuel 24:16 and 1 Chronicles 21:15, both describing an angel destroying Jerusalem with outstretched hand), the phrase *hirpɔ^h yɔd* “put down the hand” is used to indicate the cessation of an extended hand gesture (*ʃɔlah yɔd* “stretch out the hand,” *nɔtɔ^h hɛreb/yɔd* “extend the sword/hand”).

2 Samuel 24:16 wayyiʃlah yɔdo^w hammal^ʼɔk yəru^wʃɔla(y)im ləʃaḥ^atɔh wayyinnɔḥem YHWH
 ʼel-hɔrɔ^ʼɔ^h wayyo^ʼmer lammal^ʼɔk hammaʃhi^yt bɔ^ʼɔm rab ʼatto^h **hɛrɛp yɔdɛkɔ**
 u^wmal^ʼak YHWH hɔyɔ^h ʼim-goren hɔ^{ʼa}warnɔ^h haybusi^y

The angel stretched out his hand (against) Jerusalem to destroy it, but Yahweh was moved to pity because of the calamity, and he said to the angel who was destroying the people, “Enough! Now **put down your hand**.” The angel of Yahweh was near the threshingfloor of Araunah the Jebusite.

1 Chronicles 21:15 wayyiʃlah hɔ^ʼelohi^ym mal^ʼɔk li^yru^wʃɔla(y)im ləhaʃhi^ytɔh u^wkəhaʃhi^yt rɔ^ʼɔ^h
 YHWH wayyinnɔḥem ʼal-hɔrɔ^ʼɔ^h wayyo^ʼmer lammal^ʼɔk hammaʃhi^yt rab
 ʼatto^h **hɛrɛp yɔdɛkɔ** u^wmal^ʼak YHWH ʼomed ʼim-goren ʼɔrnɔn haybu^wsi^y

God sent an angel to Jerusalem to destroy it. As he was destroying, Yahweh saw and took pity because of the calamity. He said to the angel who was destroying, “Enough, now **put down your hand!**” The angel of Yahweh was standing near the threshingfloor of Ornan the Jebusite.

For the second passage, the gesture phrase referring to the extended hand (or sword) is found in the next verse, which describes king David seeing the angel.

2.3.3. *hešiyb yad* “Retract the Hand, Turn the Hand”

In three passages in the Hebrew Bible, the phrase *hešiyb yad* is used in the sense of “retract the hand,” referring to the cessation of a ritual gesture of extending the hand (the phrase *nəṭṭəḥ yad* is explicitly used in Joshua 8:26 and Isaiah 14:27).

Joshua 8:26	<p>wi^yho^wš^a‘ lo’ -hešiyb yado^w ’ašer nəṭṭəḥ^h bakki^ydo^wn ‘ad ’ašer heḥ^ri^ym ’et kəl-yošəbe^y ho’oy</p> <p>Joshua did not retract his hand which he had extended with the sword until he had annihilated all the inhabitants of Ai.</p>
Isaiah 14:27	<p>ki^y-YHWH šəbō’ o^wt yō’ oš u^wmi^y yōper wəyodo^w hannəṭu^wyō^h u^wmi^y yōšiybənno^h</p> <p>For Yahweh Sabaoth has determined (it); who will frustrate (it)? As for his extended hand, who will make it retract?</p>
Psalm 74:11	<p>ləmmo^h tōšiyb yodəkō wi^ymi^ynekō miqqereb ḥe^yqəkō kalle^h</p> <p>Why do you retract your hand, even your right hand? (Take it) from your bosom, annihilate (them)!</p>
Lamentations 2:8	<p>ḥəšab YHWH ləhašhi^yt ḥo^wmat bat-šiyyo^wn nəṭṭəḥ^h qōw lo’ -hešiyb yado^w mibballe^a wayya’abel-ḥel wəḥo^wmo^h yaḥdōw ’umlōlu^w</p> <p>Yahweh determined to destroy the wall of the daughter of Zion; he stretched out a line, he did not retract his hand from destroying; he caused both rampart and wall to mourn, they weakened together.</p>

In Psalm 74:11, the interpretation is somewhat uncertain. In the received text, the major pause in the verse (an *atnakh*) occurs after *wi^ymi^ynekō* “even your right hand.” This is reflected in NIV: “Why do you hold back your hand, your right hand? Take it from the folds of your garment and destroy them!” This interpretation, if it is correct, shows that the opposite of “retracting the hand” in this passage is the gesture of destruction or exertion of supernatural power (here implied rather than explicitly described with a gesture phrase), which would result in “annihilating.” Some interpreters (H. Bardtke in BHS; RSV, NRSV, NJB) emend *kalle^h* “annihilate” (imperative, masculine singular) to *kəlu’ə^h* “withheld” (adjective, feminine singular,

agreeing with *yamiʿn* “right hand”), moving the pause to after *yadəkə* “your hand.” This would result in two nicely balanced, synonymously parallel cola. For example, NRSV reads, “Why do you hold back your hand; why do you keep your hand in your bosom?” However, the consonantal text’s *klh* is supported by all the textual witnesses, and the translation “in” for *miqqereb* seems unlikely. Whichever interpretation is adopted, this passage is helpful in explaining the imagery of “retracting the hand,” showing that it involves tucking the hand into the robe at the bosom, at least in this instance.

We may also mention here 1 Kings 13:4, where the phrase *hešib yad* refers to the cessation of a non-ritual act of stretching out the hand (*šolah yad*). In this passage, Jeroboam, having stretched out his hand against a prophet while ordering his men to kill the prophet, finds it impossible to retract his hand, as the hand has withered.

In four other passages, *hešib yad* refers not to the cessation of a gesture of extending the hand but to the performance of it against a new Target. In these instances, as in those quoted above, the gesture is that of destruction or exertion of supernatural power. The full gesture phrase in these instances is *hešib yad ‘al-T* “turn the hand against T.”

- Isaiah 1:25 **wə’əššibəḥ yadiy ‘alayik** wə’əšrop kabbor siʿgəyik wə’əsiyərōḥ kəl-bədiʿləyik
I will turn my hand against you, I will smelt away your dross as with potash, I will remove all your impurities.
- Amos 1:8 wəhikrattiy yoʿšeb meʿašdoʿd wətoʿmek šebəṭ meʿašqəloʿn **wahʾəššibəʿtiy yadiy ‘al-‘əqroʿn** wə’əbəduʿ šə’eriʿt pəlištiʿm ʿomar ʾadonəy YHWH
I will cut off the inhabitants from Ashdod, the ones who hold the staff from Ashkelon. **I will turn my hand against Ekron**, the remnant of the Philistines will perish, says the Lord Yahweh.
- Zechariah 13:7 ḥereb ʿuʿriy ʿal-roʿiy wəʿal-gəber ʿamiʿtiy nəʿum YHWH šəbəʿoʿwt hak ʿet-ḥoroʿēḥ uʿtəpuʿšəyənə ḥəššoʿn **wahʾəššibotiʿ yadiy ‘al-ḥəššoʿriʿm**
Sword, rise up against my shepherds and against my fellows, says Yahweh Sabaoth. Smite the shepherds so that the sheep scatter; **I will turn my hand against the small ones.**

Psalm 81:15

kim 'at 'o^wyabe^yhem 'akni^{ya}' wə 'al šore^yhem 'ššib^y yod^y

I would soon subdue their enemies, **I would turn my hand against their adversaries.**

Unlike the examples quoted above in which *hešib^y yod* refers to the cessation of a gesture, the four examples just quoted do not follow any explicit reference to an extended hand gesture. However, *hešib^y yod* in each of these instances follows a description of violent acts against a Target that is different from that of the clause in which *hešib^y yod* occurs. (In the verse preceding Isaiah 1:25, Yahweh refers to wreaking vengeance on his “adversaries” and “enemies.”) The phrase *hešib^y yod 'al-T* therefore differs from other gesture phrases like *noṭṭ^h yod 'al-T* in that the focus of the description is not on the action performed but on the directing of the action against a new Target.

Several contextual elements in these passages point to the contextual type of destruction or exertion of supernatural power. The result clauses in Isaiah 1:25 refer to the refining of metal, figuratively describing the violent way in which God will cleanse Israel. This verse may, in fact, introduce the motif of God’s extended hand that recurs in Isaiah 2-14. In the other three passages quoted above, surrounding clauses use the verbs *hikri^yt* “cut off,” *'abad* “perish,” *hikkō^h* “smite,” and *hikni^{ya}'* “subdue,” which are comparable to the verbs used in result clauses following *noṭṭ^h yod 'al-T* and other phrases belonging to the same contextual type. Also, in all instances, the Agent of the gesture is Yahweh.

One other passage may be mentioned here. In Jeremiah 6:9, the phrase *hešib^y yod 'al-T* is used in a non-ritual context, but there is likely an allusion to the ritual gesture of supernatural destruction.

Jeremiah 6:9 ko^h 'omar YHWH šəbō'ot 'o^wlel yə'oləlu^w kaggəpen šə'eri^yt yiśrō'el **həšeb yədəkə** kəbo^wšer 'al-salsillo^wt

Thus says Yahweh Sabaoth: “Let them thoroughly glean the remnant of Israel like a vine; **pass your hand** like a grape-gatherer **over the branch.**”

Here there appears to be a play on words, since the plain meaning of the phrase in context is of a grape-gatherer passing his hand over the vine, but the idiom *hešiyb yəd 'al-T* is the same as the gesture of destruction or exertion of supernatural power, and this, too, is appropriate in the wider context of the prophecy concerning the destruction of Israel. For another example of a utilitarian gesture which has, at the same time, an allusion to a ritual gesture, cf. *peras yodayim* in Isaiah 25:10-11 (discussed above).

Two other non-ritual uses of the phrase *hešiyb yəd* should also be mentioned. In one biblical passage (Ezekiel 38:11-12), the phrase *hešiyb yəd 'al-T* “turn the hand against T” is used of an invading king turning the hand against villages to plunder and loot. This is analogous to the phrase *šolah yəd bəT* “stretch out the hand against T,” mentioned above, in which an inanimate Target is the object of plunder. In three passages (1 Samuel 14:27; Proverbs 19:24; 26:15), the phrase *hešiyb yəd 'el-pi' A* “turn the hand to the mouth of A” describes bringing the hand to the mouth to eat.

The multiple uses of the phrase *hešiyb yəd 'al-T*, including references both to the gesture of supernatural destruction (Isaiah 1:25; Amos 1:8; Zechariah 13:7; Psalm 81:15) and to non-ritual acts (Jeremiah 6:9; Ezekiel 38:11-12), is somewhat problematic. We have discussed several gesture phrases in which adverbial elements following the basic gesture phrase correspond to specific contextual types. In the case of this phrase, it appears that the a single full phrase may correspond to more than one contextual type. There are two possible ways of explaining these data in terms of the approach taken in this chapter. One way is to suggest that

the Target has a different role in each contextual type. The Target is animate in all cases in which the reference is to the ritual gesture, and it is inanimate in both cases in which the gesture is non-ritual. In the case of Jeremiah 6:9, the Target can be interpreted as inanimate or animate, but this corresponds precisely to the reader's focus on the image described in the text (that of the grape-gatherer, in which the gesture is non-ritual) or the situation for which the imagery is a metaphor (the destruction of Israel, in which the gesture is that of supernatural destruction). Thus one could, perhaps, treat the Target as a Target/Addressee (T_{add}) in the ritual examples and a Target/Directional (T_{dir}) in the non-ritual ones.

Another way of explaining these data is to suggest that they reflect a difference between gesture phrases and phrases referring to the cessation or redirection of a gesture. In this chapter, we have dealt with thirty gesture phrases, many of which are used in multiple contexts and/or overlap with other phrases in some contexts. Sharp distinctions between the adverbial elements of the full gesture phrase, along with other contextual indicators, would presumably help speakers of Northwest Semitic languages to negotiate the sense of a given gesture phrase. By contrast, there are only three phrases used to describe the cessation or redirection of a gesture act, and the number of specific gestures whose cessation or redirection these phrases describe is very limited. Thus it is plausible to suggest that there was no need for sharp distinctions between adverbial elements with these latter phrases.

2.4. Uncertain Examples of Gesture Phrases

2.4.1. *ḡdt yd* “Of the Hand, Shake”?

In one passage in the Ugaritic Ba‘lu cycle, it has been suggested that a phrase describing a ritual gesture occurs.

Ba‘lu, *KTU* 1.4 (40) ‘n . b‘l . qdm **ydh** (41) k **tḡd** . ’arz . b ymnh
vii 40-41

(40) Ba‘lu looked ahead of **his hand**, (41) as the cedar **shot** from his right hand.

Many interpretations have been proposed for this difficult passage. Two of these proposals, those of Mark Smith and Nicolas Wyatt, would see a ritual hand gesture here. Smith translates these two lines: “Baal eyes the East; / **His hand** indeed **shakes**, / With a cedar in his right hand.”²²⁶ Wyatt likewise interprets Ba‘lu’s action as a menacing gesture, though the details of his interpretation are different from Smith’s: “Baal spoke: / **the axe his (left) hand** indeed **brandished**, / the cedar (was) in his right hand.”²²⁷

Three issues are of particular importance in deciding whether a ritual gesture occurs here. The first issue is the distribution of cola. Both Smith and Wyatt translate these lines as a tricolon. However, other translators take this passage as a bicolon, so that the versification in this case corresponds to the distribution of lines on the tablet.²²⁸ The interpretation as a bicolon seems to yield the best parallelism, as each bicolon then consists of a verb, a subject, a preposition, and a noun referring to the hand, in that order.

²²⁶ Mark Smith in *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry*, ed. Simon B. Parker (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), 137.

²²⁷ Nicolas Wyatt, *Religious Texts from Ugarit* (London and New York: Sheffield, 2002), 110-11.

²²⁸ Cyrus H. Gordon, *Ugaritic Literature* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1949), 36; H. L. Ginsberg in *ANET*, 135; Dennis Pardee in *COS*, 1:263.

The second issue is the identification of the subject of the feminine singular verb *tgd*. In the translations of Smith and Wyatt, the subject of this verb is the feminine *yd* “hand” in the previous line. Interpreting these two lines as a bicolon, however, means that the subject of this verb is most likely *'arz* “cedar.” This would require that *'arz* be a feminine noun, which is perfectly acceptable, despite the fact that the Hebrew cognate noun *'erez* is usually masculine.²²⁹ If the subject of the verb is *'arz* and not *yd*, then the passage expresses not a gesture of the hand but rather the movement of the object in Ba‘lu’s hand.

The third issue is the meaning of the preposition *b*. If this preposition is interpreted as being governed by the verb *tgd*, which is most likely if the two lines are analyzed as a bicolon, the preposition could be translated either “in” or “from,” depending on whether the verb denotes projectile movement or some other kind of movement like waving or dancing.²³⁰ In view of these considerations, it is doubtful that a magical or symbolic gesture is involved in Ba‘lu’s action; instead, his action might be nothing more than the implied utilitarian movement of the hand in throwing or wielding a weapon.

2.4.2. *'db* “Gesture”?

One passage in the Ugaritic Aqhatu epic has also been interpreted as having a ritual gesture phrase.

²²⁹ The Hebrew noun *'erez* is clearly feminine in Ezekiel 17:22: *hō'erez hōrōmō^h* “the tall cedar.” Many have suggested emending this verse by deleting the adjective. However, this does not explain why the reading was allowed to remain in the Masoretic tradition. No Hebrew manuscripts show any attempt to change the gender of the adjective or to remove it. Of the few attestations of this noun in Ugaritic, none of the others occurs in a context that makes the gender of the word clear; see J.-L. Cunchillos, J.-P. Vita, and J.-Á. Zamora, *A Concordance of Ugaritic Words* (Piscataway, New Jersey: Gorgias Press, 2003), 1:238-39, where seven occurrences are listed. Josef Tropper, *Ugaritische Grammatik* (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2000), 286, includes the noun *'arz* in a list of “raw materials and trees” that are grammatically feminine but lack a feminine ending in Ugaritic.

²³⁰ The verb is poorly attested; there are only two attestations, the other being in a broken context, *KTU* 1.17 VI 12: [...] *k ygd . thmt . brq* / [...] “[...] as the lightning moves the deep / [...]” (?). In view of its probable Arabic cognates, the verb has a sense related to that of quick movement. Cf. the remarks of Pardee, *COS*, 1:263n191.

Aqhatu, *KTU* 'db . 'uḥry . mṭ [.] ydh
1.19 iii 49, 56; iv
7

He **took** the end of his staff in his hand.

The subject of the verb here is Dānī'ilu, who, in the wider context, is pronouncing curses against various locales. Dijkstra and de Moor translate this passage, “He put down the tip of his walking-stick.” They explain that “Dānī'ilu had raised his stick in a universal gesture of anger while he was cursing (cf. Ex. 7:19; 8:5; 10:13).”²³¹ Simon Parker’s translation of this passage likewise assumes that a ritual gesture is performed: “He **gestures** with Fate, his staff.”²³² These interpretations implicitly link this clause to the preceding curse. However, the occurrences of this clause are always followed by clauses with the verb *mgy* “come, arrive.” It is thus quite possible that the clause in question is simply a prelude to Dānī'ilu traveling to a new location: He puts (*db*) his staff in his hand, walks, and arrives (*mgy*) at a new location. For this reason, some interpreters link the occurrences of this clause to the following sections, interpreting the “gesture” simply as a utilitarian action of picking up the walking stick in order to travel.²³³ In any case, the structure of this passage and the vocabulary used do not clearly support interpreting the passage as an allusion to a hand gesture of cursing. Assuming that such a gesture would add potency to the curses spoken in this passage, it would seem strange for the narrator to refer only to the cessation of the gesture, as if it deserved mention only as an afterthought.

²³¹ Meindert Dijkstra and Johannes C. de Moor, “Problematical Passages in the Legend of Aqhatu,” *UF* 7 (1975): 209.

²³² Parker, *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry*, 75. The interpretation of *uḥry* as “Fate” follows Gordon, *Ugaritic Literature*, 99 (“Destiny”). Also cf. the interpretation of Ginsberg in *ANET*, 154: “Again he waves the staff of his hand.”

²³³ Wyatt, *Religious Texts from Ugarit*, 307: “Afterwards he took his staff in his hand”; Pardee in *COS*, 1:354: “He took thereafter (his) staff (in) his hand.”

2.4.3. *p̄raś kappayim* “Spread the Palms” in Blessing?

In 1 Kings 8, after Solomon offers a dedicatory prayer with uplifted hands, he rises and blesses the congregation of Israel. The text mentions his rising from a kneeling position, but it does not mention a cessation of the uplifted hand gesture. The question therefore arises whether the uplifted hand gesture is maintained and used as a gesture of blessing.

1 Kings 8:54-56 (54) wayhi^y kəkallo^wt šəlomo^h ləhitpallel [’]el-YHWH [’]et kəl-hattəpillo^h wəhattəhinnō^h hazzo[’]t qəm millipne^y mizbaḥ YHWH mikkəro^{a’} [’]al-birkō^yw **wəkappō^yw pərušo^wt haššəmāyim** (55) wayya[’]mod waybərək [’]et kəl-qəhal yiśrō[’]el qo^wl gədo^wl le[’]mor (56) bəru^wk YHWH [’]ašer nōtan mənū^wḥō^h lə[’]ammo^w yiśrō[’]el kəkol [’]ašer dibber lo[’]-nəpal dəbər [’]əḥəd mikkol dəbərō^w haṭṭo^wb [’]ašer dibber bəyad moše^h [’]abdo^w

(54) When Solomon finished praying to Yahweh this whole prayer and supplication, he rose from before the altar of Yahweh, from kneeling, **his palms being spread (toward) heaven.** (55) Then he stood and blessed the whole congregation of Israel with a loud voice, saying, (56) “Blessed be Yahweh, who has provided a resting-place for his people Israel, in accordance with all that he had said; not one word of his whole good message that he spoke through his servant Moses has failed.”

The idea that Solomon blessed the people with spread hands finds some support in Leviticus 9:22, which describes Aaron blessing the people of Israel with uplifted hands (*wayyisśō’...’et-yədo^w’el-hō’əm waybərəkem* “he lifted up his hands toward the people and blessed them”).

However, as far as the present writer has been able to ascertain, this idea is entirely absent from versions and commentaries pertaining to 1 Kings 8:54-56. Any argument for this idea would therefore be from silence. In view of the lack of supporting testimony in this instance, the idea must remain as nothing more than an intriguing possibility.

2.4.4. *ḥezqat yəd* “Grasping the Hand”?

In Isaiah 8, there is one passage in which the phrase *ḥezqat yəd* occurs. Some have analyzed this phrase as a gesture phrase belonging to the fourth grammatical type and referring to grasping the hand.

Isaiah 8:11 ki^y ko^h ’ōmar YHWH ’elay **kəḥezqat hayyəd** wəyissəreni^y milleket bəderek
hō’ōm-hazze^h
For thus said Yahweh to me **as his hand was strong** (upon me) and
admonished me not to walk in the way of this people.

The interpretation of this passage as referring to a grasping of the hand is quite old, dating back as far as John Calvin (ca. 1550).²³⁴ It was also adopted by Robert Lowth, the Lord Bishop of London, in his 1848 translation of Isaiah.²³⁵ Today, this interpretation underlies several major Catholic translations as well as the *Tanakh* translation of the Jewish Publication Society.²³⁶ This interpretation derives from the use of the root *ḥzq* in the idiom *ḥeḥ^zz^yq yəd* “grasp the hand” (discussed above). Other translations reflect the interpretation of *ḥezqat hayyəd*

²³⁴ John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Isaiah* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958), 1:274: “As if by taking hold of my hand. This is a beautiful metaphor, which the commentators, I think, have not understood. He alludes to fathers or teachers, who, when their words have not sufficient effect, seize the hand of their children or scholars, and hold them so as to compel them to obey.”

²³⁵ Robert Lowth, *Isaiah: A New Translation; with a Preliminary Dissertation, and Notes, Critical, Philological, and Explanatory* (London: William Tegg and Co., 1848), 15: “For thus said JEHOVAH unto me; / As taking me by the hand, he instructed me, / That I should not walk in the way of this people, saying...”

²³⁶ Einheitsübersetzung: *Denn so sprach der Herr, als seine Hand mich packte*; Bible Jerusalem: *Oui, ainsi m'a parlé Yahvé lorsque sa main m'a saisi*; NJB: “For this was how Yahweh spoke to me when his hand seized hold of me”; Nouvelle édition geneve: *Ainsi m'a parlé l'Éternel, quand sa main me saisit*; Biblia Nuova Riveduta: *Così infatti mi ha parlato il SIGNORE, quando la sua mano mi ha afferrato*. The *Tanakh* translation of this passage was published as early as 1973, in advance of the 1985 publication of the entire Hebrew Bible translation, in *The Book of Isaiah: A New Translation* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1973), 52: “For this is what the LORD said to me, when He took me by the hand and charged me not to walk in the path of that people”; the accompanying note states, “I.e. singled me out; cf. 41.10, 13; 42.6; 45.1; Jer. 31.32 [31].”

as a reference to the strength or forcefulness of Yahweh’s hand as he speaks to Isaiah; some suggest that the prophet is here described as entering into an ecstatic state.²³⁷

Though both interpretations are theoretically possible, there are arguments against interpreting the phrase in Isaiah 8:11 as a reference to a hand gesture. A noun *ḥēzqō^h* is attested elsewhere (2 Chronicles 12:1; 26:16; Daniel 11:2), and in these other instances, the noun clearly means “strength.” This is especially evident in 2 Chronicles 26:15-16: *kī^y-ḥiplī^y’ lāhe ‘ōzer ‘ad kī^y-ḥēzqō / u^wkāḥēzqōto^w ḡbah libbo^w ‘ad-lāḥašḥī^yt* “for he was miraculously helped until he became strong, / but when he was strong, he became proud until he was destroyed.”²³⁸ Further, it may be noted that grasping the hand in this context would not conform to any known contextual type. Nowhere else is Yahweh described as grasping the hand of his prophet in order to speak a prophetic message.

2.4.5. *nōtan yōd lāT* “Give the Hand to T”?

In Isaiah 56:5, there is a possible, but far from certain, use of the gesture phrase *nōtan yōd* “put forth the hand.”

Isaiah 56:5 **wənōtatti^y lōḥem** bābe^yti^y u^wbāḥo^wmotay **yōd** wōšem ṭo^wb mibbōni^ym
u^wmibbōno^wt šem ‘o^wlōm ‘ēttēn-lo^w ’āšer lo’ yikkōret

I will give them, in my house and within my walls, a “**hand**” and a name better than sons and daughters. It is an eternal name that I will give them, which will not be cut off.

²³⁷ Luther Bible, KJV, NIV, RSV, and NRSV all have “with a strong hand” or similar. The Septuagint and Vulgate translations also understand the phrase to mean “with a/the strong hand.” See also Georg Fohrer, *Das Buch Jesaja, I. Band Kapitel 1-23* (Zürich and Stuttgart: Zwingli Verlag, 1960), 129-30: *Damit ist stets gemeint, daß den Propheten ein ekstatischer Zustand befällt, daß er von Gott ergriffen und in jenem Zustand einer geheimen Erfahrung teilhaftig wird.*

²³⁸ See BDB, 305; the noun is glossed as “strength, force,” and the references in this entry include Isaiah 8:11.

Many proposals have been given for the interpretation of the word *yad*. The oldest interpretation, followed by Targum Jonathan, the Septuagint, the Vulgate, and medieval Jewish commentators, is that *yad* in Isaiah 56:5 means “place.”²³⁹ This interpretation is also followed by the Luther Bible and by KJV. The interpretation as “place” is supported by Deuteronomy 23:13, in which God commands the Israelites to designate a *yad* “place” outside the camp where people may relieve themselves.

Modern scholarship, beginning with the 1821 commentary of Gesenius and continuing in the majority of modern translations, commentaries, and studies, has interpreted *yad* as “monument” or “stela.”²⁴⁰ This view is supported by 2 Samuel 18:18, in which Absalom sets up a monument (*maššebet*) because he has no son, and he subsequently calls this the *yad* of Absalom. Other passages where *yad* may have the same or a similar meaning (1 Samuel 15:12; Ezekiel 21:24; 1 Chronicles 18:3) have also been adduced. Additional evidence for this interpretation has been drawn from archaeological evidence of stelae found in cult precincts at Hazor and other sites and from comparison with passages in Ugaritic literature.

A minority of biblical scholars has suggested other interpretations of *yad* in Isaiah 56:5 that are more or less related to those above: “offspring,” “memorial,” and “portion.”²⁴¹ In addition, some have noted that another meaning of *yad*, “penis,” may also be relevant in this

²³⁹ For an overview of the ancient sources for this interpretation, see Sara Japhet, “*yad wšm* (Isaiah 56:5)—A Different Proposal,” *Maarav* 8 (1992): 71.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 72. Cf. RSV, NRSV, NJB. See also Shemaryahu Talmon, “Yad wašem: An Idiomatic Phrase in Biblical Literature and Its Variations,” *Hebrew Studies* 25 (1984): 8-17; Ackroyd, “*yād*,” in *TDOT* 5:401-2; Oswald Loretz, “Stelen und Sohnespflicht im Totenkult Kanaans und Israels: *skn* (KTU 1.17 I 26) und *jd* (Jes 56,5),” *UF* 21 (1989): 241-46; D. W. Van Winkle, “The Meaning of *YĀD WĀŠĒM* in Isaiah LVI 5,” *VT* 47 (1997): 378-85; Joseph Blenkinsopp, *The Anchor Bible: Isaiah 56-66* (New York: Doubleday, 2003), 139; Izaak J. de Hulster, *Iconographic Exegesis and Third Isaiah* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 147-51.

²⁴¹ Gnana Robinson, “The Meaning of *jd* in Isaiah 56,5,” *ZAW* 88 (1976): 282-84; Japhet, “*yad wšm*,” 72-73, 76-80. Cf. NIV “memorial.”

passage; for example, there could be a *double entendre*, considering that the prophecy is a message of hope for eunuchs.²⁴²

All of the interpretations just described agree in two respects. First, they agree that *yōd* is not to be taken in its primary sense of “hand.” Second, and more fundamentally, they agree that the words *yōd wōšem* function syntactically as a unit. Japhet notes, for example, that the adjective *toʷb*, which follows these two words, is singular; she takes this to be evidence of the two words’ “function as a single lexeme,” presupposing, of course, that *toʷb* modifies the whole phrase and not just *šem*.²⁴³ The pointing of the text in the Masoretic tradition, which groups the words *yōd wōšem* together and includes a *zaqeph qaton* pause mark above *wōšem*, supports this analysis of the syntax. The interpretation of *yōd wōšem* as a syntactic unit is basic to the interpretations just described, since it precludes the possibility of *yōd* being part of an idiom with *wənoʷtattiʷ* and opens the possibility of *yōd* having a meaning beyond its primary sense of “hand.”

A few biblical scholars associated with the Latter-day Saint tradition, namely Avraham Gileadi, Victor Ludlow, and Donald Parry, see a gesture phrase in Isaiah 56:5.²⁴⁴ Gileadi’s translation of this passage is perhaps most lucid on this point: “to them I will give a handclasp and a name / within the walls of my house / that is better than sons and daughters.”²⁴⁵ Gileadi does not reconcile his interpretation with the syntax of this passage; in fact, a comparison of his translation with the Hebrew highlights the difficulties that seem to have prevented other interpreters from seeing a gesture phrase here. The juxtaposition of the verb “give” with the direct object “a handclasp and a name” is different from the Hebrew, in which three prepositional

²⁴² See especially Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 56-66*, 139. Cf. Ackroyd, “*yād*,” in *TDOT* 5:402.

²⁴³ Japhet, “*yōd wōšem*,” 69-70. Cf. Talmon, “*Yad wašem*.”

²⁴⁴ Avraham Gileadi, *The Apocalyptic Book of Isaiah* (Provo: Hebraeus Press, 1982), 142; Victor L. Ludlow, *Isaiah: Prophet, Seer, and Poet* (Salt Lake City: Deseret, 1982), 473; Donald Parry, Jay A. Parry, and Tina M. Peterson, *Understanding Isaiah* (Salt Lake City: Deseret, 1998), 496-97.

²⁴⁵ Gileadi, *Apocalyptic Book of Isaiah*, 142. Gileadi provides no comment on this translation.

phrases (the dative *lḥem* “to them” and the two adverbials *bābe^yti^y* “in my house” and *bāḥo^wmotay* “within my walls”) intervene between the verb *wānṭatti^y* and the noun *yḏd*. Among other examples of gesture phrases, a Target constituent rarely interrupts the basic gesture phrase,²⁴⁶ but one never finds the basic phrase interrupted by adverbial constituents that are not part of the full gesture phrase. Also, the singular verb “is” reflects the singular number of the adjective in the Hebrew (*to^wb*), but it is unclear what Gileadi understands this predicate as referring to.

Despite the manifest difficulties in this passage, it is possible to analyze the syntax in such a way that *wānṭatti^y...yḏd* may be interpreted as a gesture phrase. To wit, the adjective *to^wb* could be understood as modifying only the word *šem*. Thus Yahweh promises to give the eunuchs two things: (1) “a hand,” and (2) “a name better than sons and daughters.” This would mean rejecting the Masoretic pointing and moving the pause to the word *yḏd*; also, it would not solve the problem of the series of adverbials interrupting the basic gesture phrase.

If *wānṭatti^y...yḏd* does refer to a hand gesture here, there remains the question of whether it is an extending of the hand or a handclasp that is referred to. Elsewhere, as we have shown, it seems most probable that the gesture phrase *nṭan yḏd* refers to an extending of the hand. One of the contextual types in which this gesture phrase occurs is that of taking an oath (Ezra 10:18-19, and possibly Ezekiel 17:18). The idea that Yahweh enters into an oath or covenant with the eunuchs would fit in Isaiah 56:5. However, in these other instances of *nṭan yḏd*, it is a mortal and not Yahweh who takes the oath (*nṣṣṣ^ṣ yḏd* is the phrase most commonly used when it is

²⁴⁶ Examples include the following: *’eššṣ^ṣ ’el-šṣmayim yḏd^y* (Deuteronomy 32:40), *’eššṣ^ṣ ’el-go^wyim yḏd^y* (Isaiah 49:22). Contrast the more common usage in which the Target phrase is placed after the basic gesture phrase: *wānṭatti^y ’et-yḏd^y bāmīšrṣyim* (Exodus 7:4), *nṭanu^w yḏd taḥat šṣlomo^h hammelek* (1 Chronicles 29:24), *tānu^w-yḏd laYHWH* (2 Chronicles 30:8), *wṣ ’eššṣ^ṣ yḏd^y ləzera^ṣ be^yt ya^aqob* (Ezekiel 20:5), *wṣ ’eššṣ^ṣ yḏd^y lḥem* (Ezekiel 20:5), *nṣṣṣ^ṣ t^y yḏd^y lḥem* (Ezekiel 20:6, 15), *nṣṣṣ^ṣ t^y ’et-yḏd^y lḥem* (Ezekiel 20:23), *wayyiššṣ^ṣ yḏdo^w lḥem* (Psalm 106:26), etc.

Yahweh taking the oath), and there is no Target phrase preceded by the preposition *lə* (again, this differs from *nəśōʿ yəd*; examples of *nətan yəd* that are followed by a phrase *ləT* belong to a different contextual type, that of the pledge of allegiance); thus these instances do not fit very well with the context in Isaiah 56:5. In addition, the idea that *nətan yəd* in Isaiah 56:5 denotes an extending of the hand would mean that the verb *nətan* has two very different senses in relation to its two direct objects: the non-telic sense of “put forth, extend” in relation to *yəd* and the telic sense of “give” in relation to *šem*.

The second possibility, that *nətan yəd* denotes a handclasp in Isaiah 56:5, is more likely. We have seen several examples of Yahweh forming or affirming a covenant relationship with his chosen by grasping the hand, a scenario that fits very well with Isaiah 56:5. In particular, one notes that Yahweh gives his servant a new name in at least one of these examples (Isaiah 45:1, 3-4; cf. Isaiah 43:1), just as Yahweh gives the eunuchs an “eternal name” in Isaiah 56:5. The gesture phrases we have seen used in this context are *ʿəḥaz*, *ʿəḥʾazḥ yəmiʿn*, *heḥʿziʿq*, *təmak*, and *təməkəḥ yəmiʿn*. The occurrence of *heḥʿziʿq* in this context is especially interesting in view of the fact that the last colon of Isaiah 56:4 refers to the eunuchs “grasping my covenant” (*uʷmahʾazʿiʿqiyə m bibriʿtiʿ*), which could be understood as parallel to *wənəṭattiʿ ləhem...yəd* in the hypothetical meaning “I will grasp their hand” (in covenant).²⁴⁷ Unfortunately, there are no other examples in which *nətan yəd* can be convincingly shown to denote a handclasp, although such a meaning has sometimes been assumed to exist for this phrase.²⁴⁸

In summary, the possibility of interpreting *wənəṭattiʿ...yəd* in Isaiah 56:5 as a hand gesture cannot be ruled out. The challenges which such an interpretation faces include the syntax

²⁴⁷ Thanks are due to Erik Yingling (personal communication) for pointing this out to me.

²⁴⁸ For example, virtually all major translations (KJV, NIV, RSV, etc.) of 2 Kings 10:15 render *tənoḥ ʿet-yədəke* as “give me your hand.” In this case, the translation “put forth your hand” is at least equally viable, and we have argued above that a translation of *nətan yəd* as “put forth the hand” is generally to be preferred (see discussion under *nətan yəd*).

of the passage (the treatment of *yɔd wəšem* as a grammatical unit in the Masoretic tradition and the interruption of the supposed basic gesture phrase by three prepositional phrases) and the fact that the type of gesture most suitable to the context, namely a handclasp, is perhaps unattested among other examples of this gesture phrase. The other major possibility, that *yɔd wəšem* means “stela-and-name” or the like, fits the syntax of the passage and seems to suit the context. While it may be tempting to see a gesture phrase here, assurance on this point must await the emergence of new data.

2.4.6. *niggərɔʰ yɔd* “Of the Hand, Be Poured Out(?)”

The phrase *niggərɔʰ yɔd*, which is rare and of uncertain meaning, occurs in Psalm 77:3 in the context of seeking God.

Psalm 77:3	<p>bəyo^wm šərɔti^y ʾadonəy dərɔšti^y yɔdi^y laylɔ^h niggərɔʰ wəloʾ təpu^wg meʾanɔ^h hinnɔhem napši^y</p> <p>In the time of my distress, I sought the Lord; my hand was stretched out(?) at night and did not drop; my soul refused to be comforted.</p>
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The interpretation of this passage is complicated by textual matters. The Septuagint reads differently as follows: *en hēmera thlipseōs mou ton theon exezētēsa tais chersin mou nuktos enantion autou* “in the day of my affliction I sought God, (even) **with my hands** at night **before him.**” This differs from the Masoretic text in the number of hands (two instead of one) and in the word following the adverbial “at night” (*enantion autou* “before him,” probably representing the Hebrew *ngdh*, instead of the verb *ngrh* “be stretched out[?]”²⁴⁹). In the Hebrew consonantal text, the orthography of *ydy* would permit an interpretation as “my hands” as well as “my hand,” but

²⁴⁹ The letters *d* and *r* resemble each other and are easily confused in Hebrew script. The Syriac Peshitto reading, *ngdmy* “it has drawn me,” supports this assessment. The Latin Vulgate echoes the reading of the Septuagint: *Deum exquisivi manibus meis nocte contra eum* “I sought God with my hands at night before him.”

the verb *ngrh*, which can only be third person feminine singular, requires the interpretation as “my hand.” Although the verb *niggərḥ* is rare and difficult to interpret, there is no compelling reason to reject this reading in the Hebrew text, despite the variation evident in the Septuagint.

Another issue bearing on the interpretation of the gesture phrase here is the meaning of *niggar* (the N-stem of *ngr*). Based on etymology, there are at least four possibilities for the meaning of the word in this context. First, one could relate this word to Aramaic *ngar* “endure, flow, stream,” Syriac *ngar* “be long (of time),” Aphel “prolong, protract.” This would indicate a meaning such as “stretch out, lengthen” the hand(s). This is the (hesitant) interpretation of BDB and is also followed by most major translations (NIV, RSV, NRSV, NJB).²⁵⁰

Second, based again on the Aramaic cognate and in accordance with other occurrences of the N-stem of *ngr* in Hebrew, one could suggest that meaning “be poured out” in Psalm 77:3, at the same time understanding *yḥd* to mean “power, strength.”²⁵¹ The clause in question would thus be translated, “my strength was poured out at night.” This would be similar to the meaning of the verb in 2 Samuel 14:14, where the phrase *wəkammayim hanniggərīʾm* means “like water that is poured out” (or “like water that is spilt”). However, this would require the next clause, *wəloʾ tḥpuʾg*, to be translated as “it did not cease” instead of “it did not drop,” or else the two clauses would contradict each other.²⁵²

Third, based again on the Hebrew and Aramaic etymology, the meaning could be “drip” in the sense of giving off dripping fluid, such as sweat or blood.²⁵³ A good parallel for this meaning, with contextual similarities to Psalm 77:3, is found in Lamentations 3:49: *ʿeʾniʾ niggarḥ wəloʾ tidmeʾh* “my eye drips and does not cease.” Because of this parallel, this possibility

²⁵⁰ BDB, 620, where the translation “be stretched out” is followed by a question mark.

²⁵¹ BDB, 620, 390 (definition 2).

²⁵² Cf. BDB, 806.

²⁵³ Cf. Amos Ḥakham, *The Bible: Psalms, with the Jerusalem Commentary* (Jerusalem: Mosad Harav Kook, 2003), 173.

seems to rank at least as high as the interpretation “be stretched out” in order of likelihood, even though the image of the hand “dripping” appears somewhat unusual.

Finally, one could compare possible cognates further afield, namely Arabic *nağara* “hew, carve, plane,” *nağğār* “carpenter,”²⁵⁴ Akkadian *nagāru*, *nangāru*, *namgāru*, *naggāru* “joiner, carpenter,” all of these likely deriving ultimately from Sumerian (LÚ.)NAGAR.²⁵⁵ Comparison with these possible cognates could suggest meanings of the hand being slashed, joined, or clasped in Psalm 77:3. However, the fact that Arabic and Akkadian are less closely related to Hebrew than is Aramaic makes these latter interpretations *a priori* less likely.

Likely interpretations of the phrase in the Hebrew text of Psalm 77:3 are therefore “my hand was stretched out at night,” “my strength was poured out at night,” and “my hand dripped at night.” It is also possible that the Hebrew text is corrupt and that the correct reading is “(with) my hand before him at night.”²⁵⁶ Because of this ambiguity and the unusualness of the phrase in any case, it is uncertain how this phrase fits with other gesture phrases.

2.5. Summary

In this chapter, we have introduced a method of analyzing gesture phrases and of sorting their attestations according to context. Technical terms and a system of notation suitable to this methodology have also been introduced. Thirty basic gesture phrases have been discussed, and their attestations have been sorted into contextual types, each contextual type being associated

²⁵⁴ Wehr, 1108.

²⁵⁵ Jeremy Black, Andrew George, and Nicholas Postgate, eds., *A Concise Dictionary of Akkadian* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2000), 231.

²⁵⁶ A very different interpretation is adopted by Dahood, *Psalms II*, 223, 226: “His [God’s] hand attacks at night / and does not slacken.” Dahood’s arguments for interpreting the pronoun suffix of *γcdiʾ* as third person masculine singular and for interpreting *niggar* as “attack” are insufficient to recommend this relatively radical interpretation.

with a distinctive full gesture phrase. The results of this section (section 2.2 above) can be summarized as follows:

Table 5. Summary of Gesture Phrases of Hand-Raising, -Extending, and -Grasping

Basic gesture phrase	Contextual type	Full gesture phrase	Examples
' <i>ḥaz</i> “grasp”	Yahweh grasping the hand of his chosen	' <i>ḥaz bəR T</i> “grasp the R of T”	Psalms 73:23-24
“	*leading incapacitated parent	' <i>aḥd R T</i> “grasp the R of T”	Aqhatu, <i>KTU</i> 1.17 i 30-31
' <i>ḥ^az^h yomīⁿ</i> “of the right hand, grasp”	Yahweh grasping the hand of his chosen	' <i>ḥ^az^h yomīⁿ T</i> “of the right hand, grasp T”	Psalms 139:9-10
<i>ḥē^hzī^q</i> “grasp”	Yahweh grasping the hand of his chosen	<i>ḥē^hzī^q (bə)R T ləP</i> “grasp the R of T to P”	Isaiah 41:9, 13; 42:6; 45:1; Jeremiah 31:31-32; Job 8:20
“	*leading incapacitated parent or elder	<i>ḥē^hzī^q bəR T</i> “grasp the R of T”	Judges 16:26; Isaiah 51:18
“	*helping the poor, social upheaval	<i>ḥē^hzī^q yad T</i> “grasp the hand of T”	Ezekiel 16:49; Zechariah 14:13
<i>ḥittō^h yəd</i> “extend the hand”	destruction or exertion of supernatural power	<i>ḥittō^h yəd</i> “extend the hand”	Isaiah 31:3; Jeremiah 6:12; 15:6
<i>ḥenī^yp yəd</i> “elevate the hand”	destruction or exertion of supernatural power	<i>ḥenī^yp yəd 'al-T_{add}</i> “elevate the hand against T _{add} ”	Isaiah 11:15; 19:16; Zechariah 2:13
“	performative legal action, possibly oath	<i>ḥenī^yp yəd 'al-T_{ref}</i> “elevate the hand concerning T _{ref} ”	Job 31:21-22
“	*signal to gather	<i>ḥenī^yp yəd</i> “elevate the hand”	Isaiah 13:2
“	healing a person of leprosy	<i>ḥenī^yp yəd 'el-T</i> “elevate the hand toward T”	2 Kings 5:11
<i>ḥer'ō^h naḥat zəro^a</i> “display the might of the arm”	divine intervention	<i>ḥer'ō^h naḥat zəro^a</i> “display the might of the arm”	Isaiah 30:30

Table 5, continued

Basic gesture phrase	Contextual type	Full gesture phrase	Examples
<i>heri^ym yɔd</i> “raise the hand”	destruction or exertion of supernatural power	<i>heri^ym yɔd bəl</i> “raise the hand with I”	Exodus 7:20; 17:11-12; Numbers 20:11
“	*rebellion against a king	<i>heri^ym yɔd bəT</i> “raise the hand against T”	1 Kings 11:26-27 (2x)
“	oath	<i>heri^ym yɔd ’el-T</i> “raise the hand toward T”	Genesis 14:22-23
<i>heri^ym yɔmi^yn</i> <i>u^wšəmo ’l</i> “raise the right hand and the left hand”	oath	<i>heri^ym yɔmi^yn</i> <i>u^wšəmo ’l</i> “raise the right hand and the left hand”	Daniel 12:7
<i>heri^yš yɔdayim</i> “stretch out the hands with quick movement(s)”	praise	<i>heri^yš yɔdayim</i> “stretch out the hands with quick movement(s)”	Psalms 68:32
<i>ḥəšap zəro^a</i> “uncover the arm”	divine intervention	= basic gesture phrase	Isaiah 52:10; Ezekiel 4:7
<i>mo ’al yɔdayim</i> “putting up of the hands”	prayer	= basic gesture phrase	Nehemiah 8:6
<i>maš ’at kappayim</i> “lifting up of the palms”	prayer	= basic gesture phrase	Psalms 141:2
<i>nigləṭ^h zəro^a</i> “of the arm, be revealed”	divine intervention	= basic gesture phrase	Isaiah 53:1
<i>nəṭ^h zəro^a</i> “extend the arm”	mighty action of Yahweh	= basic gesture phrase	Exodus 6:6; Deuteronomy 4:34; 5:15; 7:19; 9:29; 11:2; 1 Kings 8:41-42; 2 Kings 17:36; Jeremiah 27:5; 32:17, 21; Ezekiel 20:33-34 (2x); Psalm 136:10-12; 2 Chronicles 6:32

Table 5, continued

Basic gesture phrase	Contextual type	Full gesture phrase	Examples
<i>nəṭəʰ yəd</i> “extend the hand”	destruction or exertion of supernatural power	<i>nəṭəʰ yəd (bəI) ‘al-T</i> “extend the hand (with I) against T”	Exodus 7:5, 19; 8:1-2 (2x), 12-13 (2x); 9:22-23 (2x); 10:12-13 (2x), 21-22 (2x); 14:16, 21, 26-27 (2x); Joshua 8:18-19 (3x), 26; Isaiah 5:25 (2x); 9:10-11, 16, 19-20; 10:4; 14:26-27 (2x); 23:11; Jeremiah 21:5; 51:25; Ezekiel 6:14; 14:9, 13; 16:27; 25:7, 13, 16; 30:25; 35:3; Zephaniah 1:4; 2:13; 1 Chronicles 21:16
“	*invitation	<i>nəṭəʰ yəd</i> “extend the hand”	Proverbs 1:24
“	*rebellion or haughty display	<i>nəṭəʰ yəd ‘el-T</i> “extend the hand against T”	Job 15:24-25
<i>nəṭəʰ yəmiʸn</i> “extend the right hand”	destruction or exertion of supernatural power	= basic gesture phrase	Exodus 15:12
<i>nəśəʷ yəd</i> “lift up the hand”	destruction or exertion of supernatural power	<i>nəśəʷ yəd/I ‘al-T_{add}</i> “lift up the hand/I against T _{add} ”	Isaiah 10:24-26 (2x); Psalm 10:12
“	*rebellion against a king	<i>nəśəʷ yəd bəT</i> “lift up the hand against T”	2 Samuel 18:28; 20:21; pAmherst 63 xxii 3 (with ‘I T “against T”)
“	oath	(a) <i>nəśəʷ yəd ləP_{obl}</i> “lift up the hand to T _{add} to P _{obl} ” (b) <i>nəśəʷ yəd ‘el-T_{dir}</i> “lift up the hand to T _{dir} ” (c) <i>nəśəʷ yəd ‘al-T_{ref}</i> “lift up the hand concerning T _{ref} ”	Exodus 6:8; Numbers 14:30; Deuteronomy 32:40-41; Ezekiel 20:5-6 (3x), 15, 23, 28, 42; 36:7; 44:12; 47:14; Psalm 106:26-27; Nehemiah 9:15

Table 5, continued

Basic gesture phrase	Contextual type	Full gesture phrase	Examples
“	*signal to gather	<i>nōśō` yōd` ʿel-T_{add}</i> “lift up the hand to T _{add} ”	Isaiah 49:22
<i>nōśō` yōdayim</i> “lift up the hands”	prayer	(a) <i>nōśō` yōdayim (adv)T_{dir}</i> “lift up the hands (to) T _{dir} ” (b) <i>nōśō` yōdayim ʿel-T</i> “lift up the hands to T”	Kirta, <i>KTU</i> 1.14 ii 21-26, iv 2-8; Rites for the Vintage, <i>KTU</i> 1.41 50-55; Zakkur, <i>KAI</i> 202 A:9-12; Psalms 28:2; 134:2; pAmherst 63 ix 17-19 (2x, once with <i>ʿl T</i> “to T”)
“	oath	<i>nś` ydyn lT</i> “lift up the hands to T”	Panammu I, <i>KAI</i> 214:29-30
“	priestly blessing	<i>nōśō` yōdayim ʿel-T_{add}</i> “lift up the hands to T _{add} ”	Leviticus 9:22
“	reaction to an appearance of Yahweh	<i>nōśō` yōdayim</i> “lift up the hands”	Habakkuk 3:10-11a
<i>nōśō` kappayim</i> “lift up the palms”	prayer	= basic gesture phrase	Psalms 63:5; 119:48; Lamentations 2:19; 3:41
<i>nōtan yōd</i> “put forth the hand”	destruction or exertion of supernatural power	<i>nōtan yōd bəT</i> “put forth the hand against T”	Exodus 7:4
“	pledge of allegiance	(a) <i>nōtan yōd taḥat T</i> “put forth the hand in submission to T” (b) <i>nōtan yōd (adv)T ləP_{exp}</i> “put forth the hand (toward) T to P _{exp} ”	2 Kings 10:15 (2x); Ezekiel 17:18 (or oath?); Lamentations 5:6; 1 Chronicles 29:23-24
“	*surrender	<i>nōtan yōd</i> “put forth the hand”	Jeremiah 50:14-15
“	oath	<i>nōtan yōd ləP_{obl}</i> “put forth the hand to P _{obl} ”	Ezra 10:18-19

Table 5, continued

Basic gesture phrase	Contextual type	Full gesture phrase	Examples
“	approaching the temple	<i>nōtan yəd ləT</i> “put forth the hand to T”	2 Chronicles 30:8
<i>pōraś kappayim</i> “spread the palms”	prayer	<i>pōraś kappayim</i> (adv) <i>T_{dir} ’el-/ləT_{add}</i> “spread the palms toward T _{dir} to T _{add} ”	Exodus 9:29, 33; 1 Kings 8:22, 38, 54; Psalm 44:21-22; Job 11:13-15; Ezra 9:5; 2 Chronicles 6:12-13 (2x), 29-30
<i>peraś (bə)yōdayim</i> “spread out the hands”	prayer/desperate plea	<i>peraś yōdayim ’el-T</i> “spread out the hands toward T”	Psalm 143:6
“	*plea for help	<i>peraś bəyōdayim</i> “spread out the hands”	Lamentations 1:17
“	*swimming (with possible allusion to prayer)	<i>peraś yōdayim</i> “spread out the hands”	Isaiah 25:10-11
“	*entreaty	<i>peraś yōdayim ’el-T</i> “spread out the hands toward T”	Isaiah 65:1-2
<i>peraś kappayim</i> “spread out the palms”	prayer/desperate plea	= basic gesture phrase	Isaiah 1:15; Jeremiah 4:31
<i>rōmō^h yəd</i> “of the hand, be high”	destruction or exertion of supernatural power	<i>rōmō^h yəd ’al-T</i> “of the hand, be high against T”	Isaiah 26:11; Micah 5:8
“	*defiant action in the sight of a higher authority	<i>rōmō^h yəd</i> “of the hand, be high”	Exodus 14:8; Numbers 15:30; 33:3; Deuteronomy 32:27
<i>rōmō^h yōmīⁿ</i> “of the right hand, be high”	destruction or exertion of supernatural power	<i>rōmō^h yōmīⁿ</i> “of the right hand, be high”	Psalm 89:14
<i>šittah kappayim</i> “spread forth the palms”	prayer	= basic gesture phrase	Psalm 88:10
<i>šōlah yəd</i> “stretch out the hand”	destruction or exertion of supernatural power	<i>šōlah yəd</i> “stretch out the hand”	Exodus 3:20; 9:15; 2 Samuel 24:16

Table 5, continued

Basic gesture phrase	Contextual type	Full gesture phrase	Examples
“	*rebellion against a king, act of violence or plunder	<i>šḏlahḥ yḏd bəT</i> “stretch out the hand against T”	1 Samuel 24:7, 11; 26:9, 11, 33; 2 Samuel 1:14; Esther 2:21; 3:6; 6:2; 8:7; 9:2, 10, 15, 16; sporadic attestations elsewhere in Hebrew and Aramaic
“	destruction or exertion of supernatural power, or *prelude to contact	<i>šḏlahḥ yḏd ʿel-T</i> “stretch out the hand against T”	Exodus 24:11; Job 1:11, 12; 2:5
“	*deliverance	<i>šḏlahḥ yḏd</i> “stretch out the hand”	Psalms 138:7
<i>təmak</i> “hold”	clasping hands with a subject people (covenant?)	<i>tmk T lyd</i> “hold T by the hand”	Kilamuwa I, <i>KAI</i> 24:13
“	Yahweh grasping the hand of his chosen	(a) <i>təmak T bīʿmīʿn šedeq A</i> “hold T by the saving right hand of A” (b) <i>təmak bəT</i> “hold T” (c) <i>tmk ymyn T</i> “hold the right hand of T”	Isaiah 41:10; 42:1; Psalm 41:13; pAmherst 63 vi 16-17 (?)
“	*holding up another’s hand	<i>təmak bīʿdeʿy T</i> “hold the hands of T”	Exodus 17:12
<i>təməkəʰ yḏmīʿn</i> “of the right hand, hold”	Yahweh grasping the hand of his chosen	<i>təməkəʰ yḏmīʿn bəT</i> “of the right hand, hold T”	Psalms 63:9
<i>tənuʷpat yḏd</i> “elevating of the hand”	destruction or exertion of supernatural power	= basic gesture phrase	Isaiah 19:16; 30:32

Note: The asterisk (*) to the left of items in the second column signifies that the contextual type is non-ritual. For the abbreviations used in the full gesture phrases in the third column, see table 1 in section 2.1 above.

In section 2.3, we have discussed three phrases used to describe the cessation or redirection of a gesture act: *heni^ʿh yɔd* “rest the hand,” *hirpɔ^h yɔd* “relax the hand,” and *hešī^ʿb yɔd* “retract the hand, turn the hand.” In some cases, these phrases are closely associated with ritual gestures, particularly that of destruction or exertion of supernatural power. However, these phrases are also used to describe the cessation or redirection of non-ritual gestures. Due to the paucity of examples of these phrases, it is difficult to determine whether distinctive full gesture phrases are used to mark specific contextual types for the cessation or redirection of a gesture.

Finally, in section 2.4, we have discussed several passages from Ugaritic literature and the Hebrew Bible that include uncertain examples of gesture phrases. In many of these cases, the interpretation as a hand gesture is suggested in published translations and/or commentaries. The likelihood of a genuine reference to a hand gesture varies from one case to another. However, due to their uncertain nature, examples such as these are generally excluded from our systematic analysis so as to avoid, as far as possible, distorting our conclusions.

In chapter 3, the full gesture phrases sorted out in section 2.2 will be matched according to contextual type. We will seek to determine which full gesture phrases are synonymous based on contextual similarity and on the semantics of the phrases themselves.

Chapter 3

Gesture Phrase Synonymy

3.1. Aim and Methodology

In chapter 2, we sorted examples of basic gesture phrases according to context, separating out homonymous phrases for different gestures. The aim of this chapter is to move from analysis to synthesis by determining which full gesture phrases occur in the same context and can be considered synonymous.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines the word “synonym” (definition 1) as follows:

Strictly, a word having the same sense as another (in the same language); but more usually, either or any of two or more words (in the same language) having the same general sense, but possessing each of them meanings which are not shared by the other or others, or having different shades of meaning or implications appropriate to different contexts: e.g. *serpent, snake; ship, vessel; compassion, fellow-feeling, sympathy; enormous, excessive, immense; glad, happy, joyful, joyous; to kill, slay, slaughter; to grieve, mourn, lament, sorrow*.¹

This definition highlights the role of context in the appropriate usage of synonymous words. The words *serpent* and *snake* might share many of the same contexts (“his rod...turned into a serpent” or “his rod...turned into a snake,” Exodus 7:10), yet other contexts would tend to differentiate the two words (virtually all translators of Isaiah 27:1 into English recognize Leviathan as a “serpent” but not as a “snake”). It is only insofar as the contexts converge that the two words or phrases can be said to share the same “shades of meaning” and “implications.” This notion of the importance of context is critical to the analysis of gesture phrases in Northwest Semitic

¹ The Oxford English Dictionary online, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/196522#eid19371874>, accessed April 28, 2011. A similar account of synonymy is given in William O’Grady et al., eds., *Contemporary Linguistics: An Introduction* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2001), 246. This latter account makes it clear that the notion of synonymy applies not only to individual words but also to “expressions” or “phrases.”

languages. Two basic gesture phrases that have “the same general sense,” such as *nōśō’ yōd* “lift up the hand” and *heri’y m yōd* “raise the hand,” may share several of the same contexts, yet there may be some contexts in which one phrase but not the other is appropriate. It is only when the two phrases share the same contextual elements that it becomes possible to discuss their common “shades of meaning” and “implications.” We therefore find it helpful to speak of synonymy specifically in relation to a given contextual type, although whether two given phrases can plausibly be said to have “the same general sense” is an important consideration in determining whether the phrases are synonymous in context.

The existence of synonymy between certain Northwest Semitic gesture phrases is implicitly accepted by many scholars, though there is no explicit formulation of this principle in connection with gesture phrases.² Occasionally, those who study the gestures described in Northwest Semitic texts suggest or assume that every gesture phrase uniquely represents a single kind of gesture. One example of this that was encountered in chapter 2 is Humbert’s interpretation of *nōtō^h yōd* and *šōlah yōd*.³ Studies that fail to recognize the synonymy of gesture phrases tend to ignore or downplay the decisive role of context in determining the sense in which a basic gesture phrase is used.

An example of synonymy between gesture phrases may be seen in a comparison of *heri’y m yōd* in Genesis 14:22 and *nōśō’ yōd* in Ezekiel 36:7.

² See, for example, Zeev W. Falk, “Gestures Expressing Affirmation,” *JSS* 4/3 (1959): 268-69; P. R. Ackroyd, “*yād*,” in *TDOT*, 5:410-17; E. Lipiński, “*nātan*,” in *TDOT*, 10:95; David Burke, “Gesture,” in *ISBE*, 2:450-53. The assumption of synonymy between gesture phrases is also found sporadically in biblical commentaries. For one among the many examples, see S. R. Driver, *The Book of Exodus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911), 44n8.

³ Paul Humbert, “Etendre la main,” *VT* 12 (1962): 383-95. Gruber’s approach to raised-hand prayer gestures also results in having only one phrase per meaning per time period; see Mayer Gruber, *Aspects of Nonverbal Communication in the Ancient Near East* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1980), 33-37, 43-44. Gruber’s arguments are addressed below in section 3.3.2.2. Some scholars also unconsciously rule out synonymy by referring to gesture phrases as “gestures,” thus conflating the verbal representation with the actual body movement that it denotes; see, for example, Gruber, *Aspects of Nonverbal Communication*, 25, 33, 34, 35.

Genesis 14:22-23 (22) wayyo'mer 'abrōm 'el-mēlek sōdom **h'ari'moti'y yōdi'y 'el-YHWH 'el 'elyo^wn qone^h šōmayim wə'ōreš** (23) 'im-miḥu^wṭ wə'ad šero^wk-na'al wə'im-'eqqah mikkōl-'āšer-lōk wəlo' to'mar 'ani'y hē'ēšarti'y 'et-'abrōm

(22) Abram said to the king of Sodom, “**I raise my hand to Yahweh El Elyon**, creator of heaven and earth, (in oath as follows): (23) If, from a thread to a sandal-thong, I take anything that is yours, (may the unmentionable occur)! You shall not say, then, ‘I made Abraham rich.’”

Ezekiel 36:7 lōken ko^h 'ōmar 'adonay YHWH 'aniy **nōšō' ti'y 'et-yōdi'y** 'im-lo' haggio^wyim 'āšer lōkem missōbi'y^b hēmmō^h kəlimmōtōm yiššō'u^w

Therefore thus says the Lord Yahweh: “**I lift up my hand** (in oath as follows): If the nations which are around you do not bear their reproach, (may the unmentionable occur)!”

Both phrases are mentioned as part of an actual oath utterance that includes other language typical of oaths, namely the particle *'im* “if” followed by a conditional clause with an elided main clause.⁴ The phrases themselves are semantically similar: *heri'm* “raise” and *nōšō'* “lift up” both refer to upward movement, and the noun that functions as direct object is the singular *yōd* “hand” in both phrases. The synonymy of the two phrases in these contexts is almost unanimously recognized among interpreters,⁵ with the exception of Johan Lust and those who follow his interpretation of *nōšō' yōd*, which was discussed (and argued against) in chapter 2.⁶ It is conceivable that an ancient Hebrew speaker reading or hearing these two passages would imagine some difference in movement between the two scenes, but if there were such a difference, it would likely be attributable to incidental factors, like the relative location and social status of the participants, rather than to the gesture phrase used; such a difference would

⁴ Cf. Blane Conklin, *Oath Formulas in Biblical Hebrew* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 14-17, 31-45; see also the discussion of these verses herein, sections 2.2.7 and 2.2.17.

⁵ Åke Viberg, *Symbols of Law: A Contextual Analysis of Legal Symbolic Acts in the Old Testament* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1992), 19, 21-22, 29; Falk, “Gestures Expressing Affirmation,” 269; Ackroyd, *TDOT* 5:411; Burke, “Gesture,” 451. The latter three sources do not mention Ezekiel 36:7 specifically, but they do connect *heri'm yōd* in Genesis 14:22 with the general use of *nōšō' yōd* in the context of taking an oath.

⁶ The first and most thorough presentation of the interpretation is Johan Lust, “Ez., XX, 4–26 une parodie de l’histoire religieuse d’Israël,” *ETL* 43 (1967): 516–26. The interpretation is discussed in section 2.2.17.

be allowable under the definition of synonymy described above.⁷ Provided that the contextual type is that of oath-taking, the “shades of meaning” and “implications” of the two phrases seem to converge sufficiently that, as far as the data available to us allow us to discern, the two phrases can be considered synonymous.

In this chapter, nine criteria are used to determine the synonymy of pairs of gesture phrases. The first eight of these criteria are like those explained in the introduction to chapter 2:

1. Similar descriptive setting
2. Similar words or phrases structurally aligned with the gesture phrase
3. Reference or allusion to the same or a similar historical or mythological event
4. Similar result clause(s)
5. Similar kind of quoted speech or reference to speech
6. Similar purpose clause
7. Semantic similarity of adverbial phrases
8. Same or similar Agent

In addition to these criteria, which are useful in determining whether two phrases are similar in terms of context, a ninth aspect is taken into consideration, namely whether the basic gesture phrases themselves have similar meanings. For example, do both phrases describe a pose with a single lifted hand or arm? This criterion accounts for the fact that different gestures may be performed in the same kind of context. In some contemporary Christian communities, for example, prayer may be offered either with both hands clasped in front or with the arms folded, both gestures being equally acceptable. It would not be plausible to suggest that the clasping of the hands and the folding of the arms are synonymous just because they occur in similar contexts.

⁷ Seely suggests that “the gesture of swearing an oath with an upraised hand (or forearm) is expressed with *ns’* in the case of divine oaths and with *hrym* for mortal oaths.” He nevertheless treats the two phrases as synonymous, as he goes on to state that “[t]he phrase *hrym yd* is also synonymous with *ns’ yd* in the idiomatic usage ‘to lift one’s hand against’ in 1 Kgs 11:26-27.” David Rolph Seely, “The Raised Hand of God as an Oath Gesture,” in *Fortunate the Eyes that See: Essays in Honor of David Noel Freedman in Celebration of His Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Astrid B. Beck et al. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 411.

This example also underscores the limitations of reconstructing gestures based solely on ancient textual sources. Certain ambiguities in Northwest Semitic verbs (such as *nʕtan* “give” or “put forth”) and body part nouns (such as *kap* “palm, hand” and *yʕd* “hand, forearm”) make it difficult, in some instances, to determine with certainty whether two phrases describe the same or a different gesture. In some cases, links between phrases may be considered relatively certain because both phrases are used to refer to the same gesture event. The incorporation of data from iconographic sources also helps to resolve some of these ambiguities; linking textual and iconographic data is the main burden of chapter 4.

The order of presentation in this chapter proceeds roughly according to the form of the gesture, from simpler to more complex. Gesture phrases describing the raising or extending of one hand are discussed first, then phrases describing gestures performed with two hands, and finally phrases describing a handclasp between two people. Within each of these three sections, the discussion proceeds by contextual type. Phrases that may be taken as prototypical of a given contextual type because of their frequency and the clarity of their context are discussed first, followed by phrases that are less frequently attested and whose membership in the contextual type may be less certain.

Other scholars’ analyses of the gesture phrases dealt with in this chapter are addressed where particularly relevant to the unity of a contextual type or to the synonymy of the phrases belonging to a contextual type. In general, commentary relating to the translation and contextual analysis of individual gesture phrases has been covered in chapter 2. For further discussion of how these phrases and the gestures they describe have been interpreted by various scholars, the reader may consult chapters 4 and 5.

3.2. Gestures of Raising or Extending One Hand

3.2.1. The Gesture of Destruction or Exertion of Supernatural Power: *nōṭṭ^h yōd (bəl) ‘al-T*

“Extend the Hand (with I) against T”

A major contextual type in which phrases referring to the raising or extending of the hand occur is that of destruction or exertion of supernatural power. By far the most common phrase used in this contextual type is *nōṭṭ^h yōd (bəl) ‘al-T* “extend the hand (with I) against T.” This phrase is attested only in the Hebrew Bible (at least for the period covered in this study) and is particularly concentrated in the books of Exodus, Isaiah, and Ezekiel. There are forty-three occurrences.⁸ Typical of the contexts in which this phrase occurs are the following aspects:

1. In virtually every attestation, the descriptive setting is a narrative or prophecy of large-scale violent action orchestrated by God, such as warfare or divine judgments. In one example (Ezekiel 14:9), the action is on a small scale, with a single false prophet as the ill-fated Target of the gesture. In the context of this verse, however, the descriptive setting quickly shifts to a large scale, with a reference four verses later (Ezekiel 14:13) to the gesture being performed against a sinful land.
2. In some examples, the gesture phrase is in parallelism with a phrase describing God’s judgments (Exodus 7:4-5), wrath (Isaiah 5:25; 9:11, 16, 20), or hostile disposition (Ezekiel 35:3), or is in a series of conjoined phrases that describe these things (Jeremiah 21:5). This structural alignment with descriptions of wrath highlights the nature of this gesture as a means of venting divine anger. In a couple of passages, phrases with which the gesture phrase is structurally aligned describe other aspects of Yahweh, namely his counsel (Isaiah 14:26-27) and his strong arm (Jeremiah 21:5).
3. There is reference or allusion to a limited set of events in Israel’s history, all of which involve the destruction of Israel or its enemies through Yahweh’s power: the plagues in Egypt (Exodus 7-10), the dividing of the sea and drowning of Pharaoh’s army (Exodus 14), the destruction of Ai (Joshua 8), a plague in Jerusalem (1 Chronicles 21), and calamities suffered by Israel, Judah, Assyria,

⁸ Exodus 7:5, 19; 8:1-2 (2x), 12-13 (2x); 9:22-23 (2x); 10:12-13 (2x), 21-22 (2x); 14:16, 21, 26-27 (2x); Joshua 8:18-19 (3x), 26; Isaiah 5:25 (2x); 9:10-11, 16, 19-20; 10:4; 14:26-27 (2x); 23:11; Jeremiah 21:5; 51:25; Ezekiel 6:14; 14:9, 13; 16:27; 25:7, 13, 16; 30:25; 35:3; Zephaniah 1:4; 2:13; 1 Chronicles 21:16. For transliteration, translation, and analysis of the individual passages, see in chapter 2 under *nōṭṭ^h yōd*.

Babylon, Tyre, Edom, the Philistines, and other lands (prophecies in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Zephaniah).

4. Result clauses describe destructive or supernatural effects of the gesture. These clauses include descriptions of annihilating, smiting, cutting off, causing (kingdoms) to quake, and other similar effects.
5. There is a complete lack of descriptions of speech accompanying the gesture. This starkly contrasts with the contextual types of other ritual gestures (like the oath and prayer gestures discussed below) and is all the more surprising given the frequency of attestations of this contextual type.
6. Purpose clauses following the gesture phrase are exactly like the result clauses; they describe supernatural or destructive effects that are expected to result from the gesture. Examples include “that there might be hail” (Exodus 9:22), “that (the locusts) might come up” (Exodus 10:12), “that there might be darkness” (Exodus 10:21), and “that he might annihilate” (Zephaniah 2:13).
7. Adverbial phrases following the basic gesture phrase are of two types: (a) those introduced with the preposition *bə* and describing a weapon or other Instrument used in the gesture (most commonly a staff or a sword), and (b) those introduced by the preposition *‘al* and describing the Target of the gesture (which may be upward from, downward from, or on a level with the Agent). These adverbial phrases may be expressed or unexpressed and can occur together.
8. The Agent of the gesture phrase is always either Yahweh or his specially commissioned servant.

Many scholars have suggested, either explicitly or implicitly, that phrases other than *nəṭṭəḥ yəd* are synonymous with this phrase in this contextual type, though these scholars do not agree on which phrases are synonymous nor on the exact significance of the phrases.⁹ The suggestions of these scholars appear, for the most part, to be based on the authors’ impressionistic analyses of these phrases and their contexts; there does not currently exist a standard formulation of synonymous relationships among these phrases. However, through a systematic analysis of aspects of context, it is possible to responsibly demonstrate synonymous relationships between *nəṭṭəḥ yəd* (*bəI*) *‘al-T* and other gesture phrases. The synthesis of phrases inevitably shows

⁹ For a few examples, see Ackroyd in *TDOT*, 5:412, 415 (implicitly connecting *nəṭṭəḥ yəd* with *heniṣp yəd* in hostile contexts); William H. C. Propp, *Anchor Bible: Exodus 1-18* (New York: Doubleday, 1999), 282 (implicitly connecting *nəṭṭan yəd* in Exodus 7:4 with *nəṭṭəḥ zəro^a*); Lipiński in *TDOT*, 10:95 (explicitly connecting *nəṭṭan yəd* in Exodus 7:4 with *šəlah yəd*); Gwilym H. Jones, *1 and 2 Kings, Volume II* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 417 (implicitly connecting *nəṭṭəḥ yəd* in 2 Kings 5:11 with *heniṣp yəd*).

varying degrees of certitude due to the limited and sometimes ambiguous nature of the data; nevertheless, it represents the most plausible synthesis of what is known about these phrases and thus provides a reasonable basis for the further analysis of this gesture.

The phrases that may, according to this synthesis, be considered synonymous are the following: *nəṭṭəḥ zəro^a* “extend the arm,” *nəṭṭəḥ yəmiⁿ* “extend the right hand,” *hiṭṭəḥ yəd* “extend the hand,” *heni^yp yəd ‘al-T_{add}* “elevate the hand against T_{add},” *heri^ym yəd bəI* “raise the hand with I,” *rəməḥ yəd ‘al-T* “of the hand, be high against T,” *nəśəṭ yəd/I ‘al-T_{add}* “lift up the hand/I against T_{add},” *nətan yəd bəT* “put forth the hand against T,” and *šəlah yəd* “stretch out the hand.” In addition, there are two gesture phrases that occur in the context of destruction or exertion of supernatural power that are not synonymous with the other phrases just mentioned, although they share many of the same functions. These phrases are *hešī^yb yəd ‘al-T* “turn the hand against T” and *her^yḥ nahat zəro^a* “display the might of the arm.” We will discuss each of the above phrases in turn.

3.2.1.1. *nəṭṭəḥ zəro^a* “Extend the Arm”

One phrase that may be linked with *nəṭṭəḥ yəd (bəI) ‘al-T* is *nəṭṭəḥ zəro^a* “extend the arm,” which is attested in the formulaic phrase *(bi)zro^a ‘nəṭṭu^wyəḥ* “(with) an extended arm” in fourteen biblical passages.¹⁰ The descriptive settings in which these attestations occur are analogous to, or in some cases the same as, those in which *nəṭṭəḥ yəd (bəI) ‘al-T* occur. These include the deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage (Exodus 6:6; Deuteronomy 4:34; 5:15; 7:19; 9:29; 11:2; 2 Kings 17:36; Jeremiah 32:21; Psalm 136:10-12), the creation of the cosmos (Jeremiah

¹⁰ Exodus 6:6; Deuteronomy 4:34; 5:15; 7:19; 9:29; 11:2; 1 Kings 8:41-42; 2 Kings 17:36; Jeremiah 27:5; 32:17, 21; Ezekiel 20:33-34 (2x); Psalm 136:10-12; 2 Chronicles 6:32.

27:5; 32:17), unspecified mighty deeds (1 Kings 8:41-42), and the gathering of Israel from the diaspora (Ezekiel 20:33-34).

Many phrases are conjoined with *(bi)zro^a ‘ nətu^wyə^h* in lists of Yahweh’s attributes or deeds. The conjoined phrases are the following:

- ’otot* “signs” (Deuteronomy 4:34; 7:19; Jeremiah 32:21)
- godel* “greatness” (Deuteronomy 11:2)
- hemə^h šəpu^wkə^h* “poured-out fury” (Ezekiel 20:33, 34)
- yəd h^azəqə^h* “a strong hand” (Deuteronomy 4:34; 5:15; 7:19; 11:2; 1 Kings 8:42; Jeremiah 32:21; Ezekiel 20:33, 34; Psalm 136:12; 2 Chronicles 6:32)
- ko^ah gədo^wl* “great strength” (Deuteronomy 9:29; 2 Kings 17:36; Jeremiah 32:17)
- mu^wsar* “discipline” (Deuteronomy 11:2)
- mo^wpəti^ym* “wonders” (Deuteronomy 4:34; 7:19; Jeremiah 32:21)
- mo^wrə’ gədo^wl* “a great awesome deed” (Jeremiah 32:21)
- mo^wrə’ i^ym gədoli^ym* “great awesome deeds” (Deuteronomy 4:34)
- milhəmə^h* “warfare” (Deuteronomy 4:34)
- massot* “trials” (Deuteronomy 4:34)
- massot gədolot* “great trials” (Deuteronomy 7:19)
- šem gədo^wl* “a great name” (1 Kings 8:42 = 2 Chronicles 6:32)
- šəpəti^ym gədoli^ym* “great judgments” (Exodus 6:6)

The phrase *šəpəti^ym gədoli^ym* “great judgments” is structurally aligned with *nəṭə^h yəd* and *nətan yəd* (see below) in Exodus 7:4-5, and *hemə^h šəpu^wkə^h* “poured-out fury” is semantically similar to *’ap* “anger,” which is parallel to *nəṭə^h yəd* in Isaiah 5:25.

The most frequent of the conjoined phrases, *yəd h^azəqə^h* “a strong hand,” is especially helpful in establishing a synonymous link with *nəṭə^h yəd (bəI) ‘al-T*. In Jeremiah 21:5 and Ezekiel 20:34, the phrases *zəro^{wa} ‘ nətu^wyə^h* “extended arm,” *zəro^{wa} ‘ h^azəqə^h* “strong arm,” *yəd nətu^wyə^h* “extended hand,” and *yəd h^azəqə^h* “strong hand” seem to be used interchangeably in very similar contexts:

Jeremiah 21:5 wənilhəmti^y ’ani^y ’ittəkəm bəyəd nətu^wyə^h u^wbizro^{wa} ‘ h^azəqə^h u^wbə’ap
u^wbəhemə^h u^wbəqəšəp gədo^wl

I myself will fight against you **with an extended hand**, a strong arm, anger, fury, and great wrath.

Ezekiel 20:34 wəho^wʃe^ti^y ʼetkəm min-ho^ʿammi^ym wəqibbaʃti^y ʼetkəm min-ho^ʿa^rʃo^wt ʼaʃer nəpo^wʃotəm bəm bəyəd h^azəq^h u^wbizro^{wa}ʿ nəʃu^wyə^h u^wbəhemə^h ʃəpu^wkə^h

I will bring you out from the peoples and gather you from the lands into which you have been scattered with a strong hand, **an extended arm**, and poured-out fury.

Lundbom sees a conscious “reversal of holy war ideology” on the part of Jeremiah in the former passage, “inverting the usual ‘(with) strong hand and (with) outstretched arm’ cliché, signifying judgment here, not deliverance.”¹¹ However, there is little warrant for positing an opposition between the two phrases. The ideas of judgment and deliverance are not mutually exclusive themes; in the narrative of the deliverance from Egypt (Exodus 7-14), for example, the judgments wrought by Yahweh’s extended hand bring about Israel’s deliverance. The phrase *nəʃu^wyə^h* can refer to actions taken by Yahweh against Israel’s enemies as well as against Israel, and *nəʃu^wyə^h zəro^aʿ* is associated with judgments (Exodus 6:6) as well as with deliverance. As already shown, the words “extended hand” (*yəd nəʃu^wyə^h*) are applied to Yahweh in a series of passages in Isaiah, both in the context of judgments against Israel (Isaiah 5:25; 9:10-11, 16, 19-20; 10:4) and in the context of destroying Israel’s oppressors to deliver Israel (Isaiah 14:26-27). While the phrase “strong arm” (*zəro^{wa}ʿ h^azəq^h*) is found only in Jeremiah 21:5, “strengthening the arms” (*hizzeq zəro^ʿot*) is found elsewhere (Ezekiel 30:24, 25; Hosea 7:15), and the notion of Yahweh’s “strong arm” is expressed with different vocabulary in Psalm 89:11, 14 (*bizro^{wa}ʿ ʼuzzəkə pizzartə ʼo^wyəbə^ykə* “with your strong arm you scattered your enemies,” *ləkə zəro^{wa}ʿ im-gəbu^wrə^h* “you have a mighty arm”). Thus, rather than reversing a cliché, Jeremiah may be understood as using alternate phrases with the same general meaning.

¹¹ Jack R. Lundbom, *The Anchor Bible: Jeremiah 21-36* (New York: Doubleday, 2004), 102.

The noun phrase $zəro^a \text{ } ^c nətu^w yd^h$, in all the passages where it is attested, occurs in a main clause governed by a finite verb. In many cases, the finite verb clause describes actions accomplished by means of the extended arm; they may thus be viewed, in a sense, as result clauses associated with the gesture phrase. These main clauses describe redeeming Israel (Exodus 6:6), taking Israel as a nation (Deuteronomy 4:34), bringing Israel out of Egypt (Deuteronomy 5:15; 7:19; 9:29; 2 Kings 17:36; Jeremiah 32:21; Psalm 136:10-12), acting against Pharaoh in Egypt (Deuteronomy 11:2-3), making the cosmos (Jeremiah 27:5; 32:17), becoming Israel's king (Ezekiel 20:33), and bringing Israel out of the nations and gathering them (Ezekiel 20:34). Aside from making the cosmos, these are not supernatural actions in themselves; they are, however, large-scale events that are accomplished indirectly by supernatural means. As was noted above, extending the arm in each of these passages is part of a list of means by which the action is accomplished, including signs, wonders, great awesome deeds, and great judgments. All of this fits with the idea that extending the arm is a way of exerting supernatural power. Like $nətu^h yd (bəl) \text{ } ^c al-T$, the contexts in which $nətu^h zəro^a \text{ } ^c$ occurs include no mention of a speech act on the part of the Agent, who is Yahweh in all cases.

The verb used in the phrase $nətu^h zəro^a \text{ } ^c$ is, of course, the same as that in $nətu^h yd (bəl) \text{ } ^c al-T$. The main difference between these phrases is the Sender. The difference can be reconciled without major difficulty both from a semantic and from a logical standpoint. First, there is some semantic overlap between the words yd and $zəro^a \text{ } ^c$. The semantic domain of the former word extends, in some usages, to the forearm and the whole arm.¹² It is not always clear which sense is intended; for example, Propp translates $u^w nətə^h-ydəkə$ in Exodus 7:19 as “extend your arm,” while most render it as “stretch out your hand.”¹³ In this study, we translate the word yd

¹² Ackroyd, in *TDOT*, 5:400; *HALOT* 2:386-7.

¹³ See Propp, *Exodus 1-18*, 287; cf. KJV, NIV, RSV, NRSV, and NJB.

consistently as “hand,” but this is not to deny that the Hebrew word can have a wider semantic range than its corresponding English word. Second, since the hand is normally attached to the arm, extending the hand implies extending the arm and vice versa. Therefore, there is no logical conflict in viewing the two idioms as descriptions of the same basic action.

3.2.1.2. *nəṭṭəḥ yəmiʿn* “Extend the Right Hand”

Another phrase that can be confidently considered synonymous with *nəṭṭəḥ yəd (bəI) ‘al-T* is *nəṭṭəḥ yəmiʿn* “extend the right hand” in Exodus 15:12. This phrase occurs in a poem recounting Yahweh’s destruction of the Egyptian army at the sea (as narrated in Exodus 14). Thus both the descriptive setting and the historical reference are the same as examples of *nəṭṭəḥ yəd (bəI) ‘al-T*. Although Moses is the one performing the gesture in the narrative version of the account (Exodus 14:26-27), the variation between Yahweh and Moses as Agent of the gesture phrase conforms to usage elsewhere in the pericope of the plagues in Egypt (cf. Exodus 7:4-5, 19-20, 25; 17:5).¹⁴ Although Moses is seen as the instrumentality through whom the gesture is performed, it is Yahweh who ultimately claims credit for the gesture.¹⁵ The colon that follows and is parallel to the gesture phrase in Exodus 15:12 describes the earth swallowing the Egyptians, which is a result of the gesture: *tiblə ‘emoʷ ʾərəṣ* “the earth swallowed them (i.e. Pharaoh’s armies).” This supernatural result is consistent with those seen for the phrase *nəṭṭəḥ yəd (bəI) ‘al-T*. There is no speech mentioned in the context of Exodus 15:12, which is also similar to what is found for *nəṭṭəḥ yəd (bəI) ‘al-T*. A lack of any purpose clause or adverbial constituent following *nəṭṭəḥ yəmiʿn* in

¹⁴ In general on the alternation between Yahweh and Moses in this part of Exodus, see Propp, *Exodus 1-18*, 324.

¹⁵ Mention could be made here of an interesting passage in Exodus 14:31: *wayyar ʾyiśrəʿel ʾet-hayyəd haggədoləḥ ʾāšer ʾəsəḥ YHWH bəmišrayim*. This is usually translated “Israel saw the great work that Yahweh did in Egypt” or the like; however, the passage could also be translated as “Israel saw the great hand with which Yahweh dealt with Egypt” (for this use of *ʾəsəḥ bə*, cf. BDB, 794, definition I.2., and Jeremiah 18:23), perhaps indicating a literal performance of a gesture by Yahweh at the sea. Also cf. Isaiah 10:26, discussed below.

Exodus 15:12 makes a thorough comparison impossible, but the foregoing contextual indicators (six out of eight) are enough to indicate a commonality of contextual type.

Both phrases, *nɔʔɔ^h yɔmiⁿ* and *nɔʔɔ^h yɔd*, use the same verb. The noun *yɔmiⁿ* “right hand” is more specific than *yɔd* “hand,” but one would naturally assume that the gesture of destruction or exertion of supernatural power denoted by *nɔʔɔ^h yɔd (bəl)* ‘*al-T* would be performed with the right hand. If it were performed with the left, this would be unusual and would most likely be mentioned (cf. Judges 3:21). Therefore, there is no evident obstacle to the two phrases being considered synonymous.

3.2.1.3. *hiʔʔɔ^h yɔd* “Extend the Hand”

Another synonymous phrase is *hiʔʔɔ^h yɔd* “extend the hand” (Isaiah 31:3; Jeremiah 6:12; 15:6). In all three of the passages where this phrase occurs, the descriptive setting is a prophecy of large-scale judgments carried out by Yahweh. The Targets against which Yahweh extends his hand in these three passages are Egypt (Isaiah 31:3) and Jerusalem (Jeremiah 6:12; 15:6), again matching the events described by the phrase *nɔʔɔ^h yɔd (bəl)* ‘*al-T*. Result clauses following the gesture phrase use the verbs *kɔʕal* “stumble,” *nɔpal* “fall,” *kɔlɔ^h* “be annihilated” (all referring to the Target in Isaiah 31:3), and *hišhⁱʔt* “destroy” (Jeremiah 15:6). Although none of these verbs precisely matches those used in result clauses following *nɔʔɔ^h yɔd (bəl)* ‘*al-T*, the general sense of destruction is clearly evident. There is no indication of speech associated with the gesture in these three passages. Finally, the preposition ‘*al* introduces the Target in Jeremiah 6:12; 15:6.

The only difference between *hiṭṭō^h yōd* and *nōṭō^h yōd* is the stem of the verb, which is Hiphil in the former and Qal in the latter. Both stems of this verb may have the sense of “stretch out, extend.”¹⁶ Thus the two phrases may be viewed as synonymous.

3.2.1.4. *heni^yp yōd* ‘*al-T_{add}* “Elevate the Hand against T_{add}”

Another phrase that may be considered synonymous with *nōṭō^h yōd (bəl)* ‘*al-T* is *heni^yp yōd* ‘*al-T_{add}* “elevate the hand against T_{add}” (Isaiah 11:15; 19:16; Zechariah 2:13). Together with this, we may include the phrase *tənu^wpat yōd* “elevating of the hand” (Isaiah 19:16; 30:32), which is linked with *heni^yp yōd* ‘*al-T_{add}* in Isaiah 19:16 through the use of a “cognate accusative” construction: *tənu^wpat yad-YHWH šəbō[’]o^wt[’] ašer-hu^w’ meni^yp* ‘*əlō^w* “the elevating of Yahweh Sabaoth’s hand that he elevates against it.”¹⁷ As with examples of *nōṭō^h yōd (bəl)* ‘*al-T*, the passages in which *heni^yp yōd* ‘*al-T_{add}* occurs are prophecies of large-scale judgments in which Yahweh performs a destructive gesture against foreign nations (Egypt in Isaiah 11:15; 19:16, and the nations which spoiled Judah, including Babylon, in Zechariah 2:13). In Isaiah 11:15, there may be an allusion to the crossing of the sea described in Exodus 14, where the phrase *nōṭō^h yōd (bəl)* ‘*al-T* is used:

Isaiah 11:15	<p>wəhəḥ^ḗri^ym YHWH ’et ləšō^wn yōm-miṣrayim wəheni^yp yōdo^w ‘al-hannōḥōr ba’yōm ru^wḥo^w wəhikkōhu^w ləšib[’]ō^h nəḥōli^ym wəhidri^yk bannə[’]ōli^ym</p> <p>Yahweh will annihilate the tongue of the Egyptian sea; he will elevate his hand against the river with the heat of his breath; he will smite it in the seven streams; he will let people tread (there) with sandals.</p>
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¹⁶ BDB, 639-41.

¹⁷ On the cognate accusative construction, see GKC, §117p-r; *IBHS*, §10.2.1f-g. Isaiah 19:16 is a special case, since the verb occurs in a relative clause following the cognate noun; this might explain why this passage is not mentioned in the two works cited.

Note here, in particular, the mention of Yahweh’s “breath” (*ru^{wa}ḥ*), which is reminiscent of the “east wind” (*ru^{wa}ḥ qōdī^ym*) by which Yahweh divided the sea in Exodus 14:21, and the mention of letting people tread there.¹⁸ The following verse in Isaiah makes clear reference to the deliverance from Egypt (*ka^ašer ḥayət^h ləyiśrō^l el bəyo^wm^a loto^w me^l ereš mišrāyim* “as it was in the day that Israel came up from the land of Egypt”), though in the context of returning from Assyrian captivity. The parallelism in Isaiah 19:16-17, which aligns *tənu^wpat yōd/heni^yp yōd* with *‘ešō^h/yō^l ‘aš* “(to determine) counsel,” compares well with Isaiah 14:26-27, where *‘ešō^h/yō^l ‘aš* is aligned with *nōtō^h yōd*:

Isaiah 19:16-17 (16) bayyo^wm hahu^w yihye^h mišrayim kannōšī^ym
wəḥōrad u^wpōḥad
mippəne^y **tənu^wpat yad**-YHWH šəbō^o’o^wt
^ašer-hu^w **meni^yp** ‘ōlō^yw
(17) wəḥōyətō^h ‘admat yəhu^wdō^h ləmišrayim ləḥōggo^l
kol ^ašer yazki^yr ‘otō^h ‘elō^yw yiphōd
mippəne^y **‘ašat** YHWH šəbō^o’o^wt
^ašer-hu^w **yo^w‘eš** ‘ōlō^yw

(16) In that day Egypt will be like women.
It will tremble and fear before **the elevating** of Yahweh Sabaoth’s **hand** that he **elevates** against it.
(17) The land of Judah will be a (cause of) reeling in terror to Egypt.
Everyone to whom one mentions it (i.e. Judah) will fear before the **counsel** of Yahweh Sabaoth that he **determines** against it (i.e. Egypt).

Isaiah 14:26-27 (26) zo^l’t ḥō^l **‘ešō^h hayyō^l u^wšō^h** ‘al-kōl-ḥō^l ‘oreš
wəzo^l’t **hayyōd hannōṭu^wyō^h** ‘al-kōl-haggo^wyim
(27) ki^y-YHWH šəbō^o’o^wt **yō^l ‘aš** u^wmi^y yōper
wəyōdo^w hannōṭu^wyō^h u^wmi^y yōšī^ybənnō^h

¹⁸ Cf. Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: The English Text, with Introduction, Exposition, and Notes, vol. I: Chapters 1 to 18* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 399-400; H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Isaiah* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1971), 1:225; John D. W. Watts, *Word Biblical Commentary: Volume 24, Isaiah 1-33* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 217. Watts explicitly draws a connection between the *ru^{wa}ḥ* “wind, breath” in Exodus 14:21 and Isaiah 11:15, and all three commentators recognize the purposeful thematic link between the two pericopes.

(26) This is **the counsel that is determined** for the whole land;
 this is **the hand that is extended** against all the nations.
 (27) For Yahweh Sabaoth **has determined** (it); who will frustrate (it)?
 As for **his extended hand**, who will make it retract?

As is usual with the gesture of destruction or exertion of supernatural power, there is no mention of speech in connection with the phrase *heniʿp yɔd* ‘*al-T_{add}*. The verbs used in result clauses following this phrase include *hikkɔʰ* “smite” (Isaiah 11:15) and *hɔyɔʰ šɔlɔl* “become spoil” (referring to the Target, Zechariah 2:13), which closely match some of the result clauses attested for *nɔʦɔʰ yɔd (bəl)* ‘*al-T*. For example, *hikkɔʰ* “smite” occurs with the latter phrase in Exodus 8:13 and Isaiah 5:25, and *nɔtan ləbaz* “make into a spoil” occurs with it in Ezekiel 25:7. In Isaiah 11:15, the use of the verb *həhʿriʿm* “annihilate” in connection with the gesture phrase compares well with the use of the same verb with *nɔʦɔʰ yɔd (bəl)* ‘*al-T* in Joshua 8:26. Finally, the use of the preposition ‘*al* (here in the hostile sense of “against”) preceding the Target is similar to *nɔʦɔʰ yɔd (bəl)* ‘*al-T* and many of the other phrases discussed in this section.

In some traditions of biblical translation, the verb *heniʿp* has been translated as “wave” or similarly.¹⁹ In this understanding of the verb, it would be difficult to link the phrase *heniʿp yɔd* ‘*al-T_{add}* in a synonymous relationship to *nɔʦɔʰ yɔd (bəl)* ‘*al-T*. A turning point in the understanding of the verb *heniʿp* was reached in a study by Jacob Milgrom. Milgrom argues, based on the parallelism in Isaiah 10:15 and 13:2, suitability to the context in Isaiah 11:15 and 19:16, comparison with the Arabic cognate *nāfa* “be high, lofty,” and comparison with the contextually parallel Egyptian verb *βi* “raise, lift up,” that the meaning of the verb is not “wave” but “elevate.”²⁰ This agrees with the Vulgate’s rendering of Isaiah 11:15 and Zechariah 2:13, in

¹⁹ Cf. KJV and RSV for Isaiah 11:15; 19:16; Zechariah 2:13; also BDB, 631-32.

²⁰ Jacob Milgrom, “The Alleged Wave-Offering in Israel and in the Ancient Near East,” *IEJ* 22 (1972): 33-38; cf. Wehr, 1185; Faulkner, 97; *WĀS*, 1:572.

which *heriʿp* is translated by *levare* “raise.”²¹ The notion of “extending” the hand and that of “elevating” it are not in conflict. If one raises the hand high above the head, for example, one is at the same time holding that hand away from the trunk of the body, that is, extending it.

Likewise, if one extends the hand forward as if to give a signal to a person standing opposite, one is at the same time elevating that hand from its resting position. A number of hand motions could be described as either “extending the hand” or “elevating the hand”; thus the semantics of these phrases pose no problem for a treatment of them as synonymous, provided that both phrases occur in the same contextual type.²²

3.2.1.5. *heriʿm yəd bəl* “Raise the Hand with I”

Next, we may mention the phrase *heriʿm yəd bəl* “raise the hand with I” (Exodus 7:20; 17:11-12; Numbers 20:11). The descriptive settings in which this phrase occurs are analogous to those attested for *nəṭṭʰ yəd (bəl)* ‘*al-T*: changing the water of the Nile to blood (Exodus 7:20), exerting supernatural power in a battle against a foreign army (Exodus 17:11-12), and miraculously causing water to come out of a rock (Numbers 20:11). In the case of Exodus 7:20, there is a virtually explicit connection between *nəṭṭʰ yəd (bəl)* ‘*al-T* and *heriʿm yəd bəl*, as both phrases are used to refer to the same gesture event within a single passage:

Exodus 7:19-20 (19) wayyoʿmer YHWH ʿel-mošəḥ ʿemor ʿel-ʿahʿaron qaḥ matṭəkə **uʷnəṭṭeḥ-yədəkə** ʿal-meʷmeʷ mišrayim ʿal nahʿarotəm ʿal-yəʿoreʷhem wəʿal-ʿagmeʷhem wəʿal kəl-miqweḥ meʷmeʷhem wəyihyūʷ-dəm wəḥəyṭḥ dəm bəkəl-ʿereš mišrayim uʷbəʿešiʷm uʷbəʿabəniʷm (20) wayya ʿaʷsuʷ-ken mošəḥ wəʿahʿaron kaʿašer šiwwəḥ YHWH **wayyərəm bammaṭṭeḥ** wayyak ʿet-hammayim ʿašer bayʿor ləʿeʷneʷ parʿoḥ uʷləʿeʷneʷ ʿabəḍəʷw wayyehəpəkuʷ kəl-hammayim ʿašer bayʿor ləḍəm

²¹ In Isaiah 19:16, however, the verb *movere* “move” is used.

²² Many translators and commentators treat the two phrases as synonymous. NJB, for example, renders both *nəṭṭʰ yəd* in Isaiah 5:25 and *heriʿp yəd* in Isaiah 11:15 as “raise the hand.”

(19) Yahweh said to Moses, “Say to Aaron, ‘Take your staff **and extend your hand against the waters of Egypt**—against their rivers, their streams, and their ponds, that is, all their bodies of water—and they will become blood.’ There will be blood all over the land of Egypt, even on their trees and rocks.” (20) Moses and Aaron did so, as Yahweh commanded. **He raised (his hand) with the staff**²³ and smote the water that was in the stream (i.e. the Nile) in the sight of Pharaoh and of his servants. Then all the water that was in the stream turned to blood.

Many scholars assign verses 19-20a and 20b to different documentary sources: P (verses 19-20a) and JE (verse 20b).²⁴ In this analysis, the two gesture phrases belong to somewhat different versions of the narrative of this first plague. We quote here from Propp’s translation, which is conveniently marked according to sources:

Exodus 7:17-18, 20b (JE) (17) Thus has Yahweh said: “By this you may know that I am Yahweh. See: I am going to strike with the rod that is in my hand upon the waters that are in the Nile, and they will turn to blood. (18) And the fish that is in the Nile will die, and the Nile will reek, and Egypt will be unable to drink waters from the Nile.” ... (20b) And **he raised with the rod** and struck the waters that were in the Nile to Pharaoh’s eyes and to his slaves’ eyes, and all the waters that were in the Nile were turned to blood.²⁵

Exodus 7:19-20a (P) (19) And Yahweh said to Moses, “Say to Aaron, ‘Take your rod and **extend your arm** over Egypt’s waters—over their rivers, over their “niles” and over their marshes and over every reservoir of their waters, that they become blood.’ And blood will be in all the land of Egypt, in the stocks and in the stones.” (20a) And Moses and Aaron did so, as Yahweh commanded.²⁶

According to this analysis, the Agent of *heriʾm yōd bəl* in Exodus 7:20 (in the original, unredacted form of the narrative) may actually be Yahweh, though it is also possible to

²³ For discussion of the grammar in this phrase, in which an implied “hand,” rather than the staff, is understood as the object of the verb, see under *heriʾm yōd* “raise the hand” in chapter 2.

²⁴ Driver, *Book of Exodus*, 55, 59; Martin Noth, *Exodus: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962), 62-63; Georg Fohrer, *Überlieferung und Geschichte des Exodus* (Berlin: Verlag Alfred Töpelmann, 1964), 70; Moshe Greenberg, “The Redaction of the Plague Narrative in Exodus,” in *Near Eastern Studies in Honor of William Foxwell Albright*, ed. Hans Goedicke (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1971), 248-49; Brevard S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1974), 131; Propp, *Exodus 1-18*, 287, 310-13, 318.

²⁵ Propp, *Exodus 1-18*, 287.

²⁶ *Ibid.* It should be noted that Propp’s translation style is intentionally hyperliteral; see *ibid.*, 40.

understand it as Moses.²⁷ This separation of the narrative into two sources could be seen as weakening the connection between the phrases *heriʿm yɔd bəI* and *nɔʔɔʰ yɔd (bəI) ʿal-T* in this passage, since it would mean that the alternation between the two phrases is not attributable to the mind of a single narrator, for whom the two phrases would then have to be considered synonymous. However, the fact remains that both phrases refer to very similar gesture events, and the prevalent source analysis presupposes that the redactor understood a connection between the two. Therefore, whether the alternation between the two phrases is understood as a primary or a secondary feature of the narrative, the fact that they are linked in this passage is evidence that they were considered synonymous to some degree and at some point in time.

In two of the passages, namely Exodus 7:20 and Numbers 20:11, the clause to which the gesture phrase belongs is immediately followed by a description of “smiting” (Hebrew *hikkɔʰ*), which is followed in turn by a description of a supernatural result. In Exodus 7:20, Aaron raises his hand with his staff and smites the water of the Nile, causing the water to turn to blood. In Numbers 20:11, Moses raises his hand and then smites a rock with his staff, causing water to come out of the rock. Other phrases belonging to this contextual type of destruction or exertion of supernatural power also mention smiting following the gesture. These include the following phrases that have already been discussed:

²⁷ Driver, *Book of Exodus*, 59; Propp, *Exodus 1-18*, 325.

Table 6. Examples of “Smiting” Following the Extending or Elevating of the Hand

Full gesture phrase	Reference	Comment
<i>nṣṭṣ^h yṣd (bəl) ‘al-T</i>	Exodus 8:13	Aaron extends his hand with the staff and smites the dust of the earth, turning the dust into lice
	Isaiah 5:25	Yahweh extends his hand and smites his people, causing destruction
<i>heni^yp yṣd ‘al-T_{add}</i>	Isaiah 11:15	Yahweh elevates his hand against the river and smites it, allowing people to tread through with sandals

Other examples of smiting following an uplifted hand gesture occur in Exodus 3:20; 9:15; Isaiah 10:24, 26; the gesture phrases in these examples are *šṣlah yṣd* “stretch out the hand” and *nṣṣṣ^y yṣd/I ‘al-T_{add}* “lift up the hand/I against T_{add},” which are discussed below. Some of the examples mentioned above (such as Numbers 20:11) seem to involve a literal act of striking involving physical contact. However, other examples are less clear in this respect; for instance, in Exodus 8:13, one might question whether Aaron literally strikes the dust with his staff or merely raises his staff and “smites” the dust magically. The latter possibility finds support in examples like Exodus 17:11-12 and Joshua 8:18-19, 26, in which the uplifted hand gesture is performed at a distance from the Target and is sustained as the supernatural result unfolds. Examples in which Yahweh performs an uplifted hand gesture and then “smites” (such as Isaiah 11:15) are subject to similar interpretive possibilities: do they figuratively apply an image of Yahweh’s hand or weapon hitting a foe, or do they refer to Yahweh raising his hand to “smite” telesthetically?²⁸

Two important questions, then, arise in connection with the present discussion on the synonymy

²⁸ It is difficult to find suitable terms to describe acts of “smiting” in the Hebrew Bible, especially when the “smiting” is attributed to Yahweh. The terms *literal*, *figurative*, *concrete*, and *magical* present various semantic and theological problems. We have chosen to use the term *physical* to describe an act of smiting involving contact between the Agent’s hand or weapon and the Target’s body (including instances in which the Agent and/or the Target is a personification and the image of physical smiting is applied figuratively), and we use the term *telesthetic* to describe “smiting” without such physical contact (including instances in which neither participant is a mere personification but the means of smiting are invisible). On the use of the verb *hikkṣ^h* “smite” in a telesthetic sense, see BDB, 646, under definition 4 of the Hiphil.

of gesture phrases. First, in what cases is the “smiting” to be understood as a physical striking subsequent to the uplifted hand gesture, as opposed to telesthetic “smiting” resulting from the gesture? Second, does this affect the hypothesis that these phrases are synonymous in the context of destruction or exertion of supernatural power?

Concerning the extent of physical striking following an upraised hand gesture in this contextual type, there are three possibilities to consider. First is the possibility that *hikkō^h* “smite” in this contextual type always refers to telesthetic, not physical, smiting. This works well in passages that refer to Yahweh “smiting” groups of people and natural elements (Isaiah 5:25; 11:15); some commentators have posited that this conception also fits with the plague narratives in Exodus, at least at some stage of the development of the narrative.²⁹ However, this possibility is very difficult to sustain in view of Numbers 20:11, where the physicality of the smiting is indicated by its being carried out by means of a staff (elsewhere, the hand gesture and not the subsequent act of smiting is performed with the staff) and by its occurring in two iterations: *wayyak ’et-hassela ‘ bəmattehu^w pa ‘amōyim* “he smote the rock with his staff twice.” Moreover, in Exodus 7:20, the fact that the smiting, in addition to the gesture of raising the hand, is carried out “in the sight of Pharaoh and of his servants” implies that the smiting is visible and thus most likely physical; one also finds attractive the imagery of the water “bleeding” as if from a gash after a physical act of striking with the rod.³⁰

At the opposite extreme, one could suggest that *hikkō^h* “smite” in this contextual type is always to be interpreted as a physical act. In the two instances in which “smiting” is explicitly mentioned in Moses’ and Aaron’s execution of Yahweh’s instructions to bring about the plagues (Exodus 7:20; 8:13), the Target is close enough to the Agent that physical smiting is feasible: the

²⁹ Noth, *Exodus*, 73; Samuel E. Loewenstamm, *The Evolution of the Exodus Tradition* (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1992), 152-54.

³⁰ Loewenstamm, *Evolution of the Exodus Tradition*, 152.

water of the Nile in Exodus 7:20 and the dust of the earth in Exodus 8:13. This contrasts with instances in which the Target is distant from the Agent (such as those in which the Target is the sky: Exodus 9:22, 23; 10:21, 22), which include no mention of smiting. A similar contrast exists between Yahweh's instruction and the execution of that instruction in the received text of Exodus 7:19-20. In the instruction given by Yahweh in verse 19, the Target of the gesture is to be all the bodies of water in Egypt, which it would be impossible to strike physically; accordingly, the instruction includes a command to extend the hand but contains no mention of smiting. In verse 20, the execution of the gesture includes smiting, but the Target is less ubiquitous: "the water that was in the stream" (i.e. the Nile). Therefore, all of the instances in which a human is described as raising or extending the hand and then "smiting" agree with the physical interpretation of "smite." However, among the instances of Yahweh raising or extending the hand and then "smiting," Isaiah 5:25 poses a problem for this interpretation. Here Yahweh extends his hand against his people and "smites" them (*wayyēṭ yādoʷ ʿāḇāʷ wayyakkehuʷ*), and his hand is described multiple times in this section of Isaiah as "still extended" (*wə ʿōʷd yādoʷ nāṭuʷ yōʰ*, Isaiah 5:25; 9:11, 16, 20; 10:4).³¹ The image is therefore of a prolonged gesture, which is more compatible with the notion of telesthetic "smiting" than with the notion of Yahweh figuratively extending the hand to strike a physical blow. For example, one may compare the prolonged gestures of Moses in Exodus 17:11-12 and of Joshua in Joshua 8:18-19, 26, which bring about the destruction of an enemy from a distance.

³¹ The Hebrew word *ʿōʷd*, in addition to "still," can have the sense of "again." However, the latter interpretation is ruled out by the preceding parallel colon: *bəkol-zo ʿt lo ʿšəb ʿappoʷ* "for all this his wrath did not retract." Retracting of the hand and of wrath is here contrasted with continued extension; the contrast would be nonsensical if the idea in the second colon were that of repeated retracting and stretching out. Virtually all translations (KJV, RSV, NIV, NJB) render *ʿōʷd* here as "still" or retain a similar sense; cf. the German Einheitsübersetzung, which translates the second colon as *seine Hand bleibt ausgestreckt* "his hand remains stretched out." Cf. also BDB, 728.

The third possibility, namely that contextual factors determine whether “smiting” following a hand gesture is physical or telesthetic, is the most reasonable in view of the data. Specifically, *hikkō^h* “smite” following a gesture of raising or extending the hand may be interpreted in a physical sense when the Agent of the gesture is human, the Target is proximate and concrete, and there are indications of physical aspects like visibility, use of an instrument, or repetition of the action in the clause that includes *hikkō^h*. The verb may be interpreted in a telesthetic sense when the Target is distant and/or the gesture of raising or extending the hand is sustained during the smiting. Examples of physical smiting in this context would thus include Exodus 7:20; 8:13; and Numbers 20:11. An example of telesthetic “smiting” would be Isaiah 5:25. Because this approach does not cling to a single interpretation of “smiting” in this context but instead relies on contextual factors, it permits ambiguity in some instances. Such an instance is Isaiah 11:15, which describes Yahweh elevating his hand against a river and “smiting” it; there are not enough explicit contextual factors here to determine with certainty whether the “smiting” is physical or telesthetic.

The second question raised by the different senses of *hikkō^h* “smite” is whether the variation in sense affects the synonymy of gesture phrases in the context of destruction or exertion of supernatural power. For example, if instances in which “smite” is to be interpreted in a physical sense happened to line up with the use of the phrase *heri[’]m yōd bəl*, and instances in which “smite” is to be interpreted in a telesthetic sense happened to line up with the use of the phrase *nōtō^h yōd (bəl) ‘al-T*, this might suggest that the two gesture phrases are distinct in the body movements they denote: a drawing-back of the hand in preparation for physical smiting on the one hand, and a static pose resulting in telesthetic “smiting” on the other. However, a number

of factors suggest that, on the contrary, the phrases that have been discussed are essentially the same in their range of uses.

If we first examine cases in which *nɔʔɔ^h yɔd (bəl) ‘al-T* is followed by the verb *hikkɔ^h*, namely Exodus 8:13 and Isaiah 5:25, we find that the context indicates an interpretation of *hikkɔ^h* as physical in the first case but allows only a telesthetic interpretation of the verb in the second case. If we examine all the instances of *nɔʔɔ^h yɔd (bəl) ‘al-T* in the plague narrative surrounding Exodus 8:13, we find that the physical smiting that is likely present in Exodus 8:13 is neither mentioned explicitly nor even possible in the majority of cases. Notwithstanding this, the repetition of the phrase as a unifying motif of the narrative suggests that the gesture is to be understood as essentially the same throughout the narrative.

The phrase *heri^ym yɔd bəl*, similarly, can describe a gesture involving physical smiting as well as a prolonged gesture with results effected at a distance, both of these varieties being viewed as essentially the same gesture. Physical smiting, which is definitely present in Exodus 7:20 and Numbers 20:11, is not possible in Exodus 17:11. The latter passage is similar to the former two in that it describes Moses raising his hand while holding a staff, then bringing about a supernatural result; however, the gesture is performed at a distance from the Target and is prolonged as the supernatural result takes effect.

For each of these two phrases, then, the kind of smiting that follows the gesture varies from physical to telesthetic, even though each phrase is contextually unified in most respects. One way of explaining this variation is that the physical smiting following the performance of the gesture may have been optional and not essential to bringing about the gesture's supernatural effect. In any case, the presence or absence of physical smiting does not detract from the hypothesis that *heri^ym yɔd bəl* is synonymous with *nɔʔɔ^h yɔd (bəl) ‘al-T* and with the other

phrases discussed in this section; indeed, the range of uses with and without physical smiting is one more point of similarity between these phrases.

In the three passages in which *heri'm yad bəl* is found, there is no mention of speech occurring together with the gesture. Numbers 20:11, however, is an interesting case. Prior to Moses' performance of the gesture, Yahweh had commanded Moses to "speak to the rock," not raise his hand and smite it (Numbers 20:8); yet the actual description of Moses' performance does not mention speaking, only raising the hand and smiting. After the miracle resulting from Moses' gesture, Yahweh reprimands Moses and Aaron for failing to believe in Yahweh and sanctify him before the people (verse 12). The reason for this reprimand could be Moses' incomplete or incorrect performance of Yahweh's instructions, though other interpretations are possible.³² In any case, despite the fact that Yahweh has commanded Moses to speak to the rock, there is no apparent use of speech with the gesture of raising the hand, which accords with other examples of the gesture of destruction or exertion of supernatural power.

Like *nəṭṭ^h yad (bəl) 'al-T*, the phrase *heri'm yad bəl* includes in Instrument constituent introduced by the preposition *bə* "with." The Instrument constituent is overt in Exodus 7:20, in which Moses raises his hand "with the staff." The staff used by Moses is also mentioned in Exodus 17:11-12 and in Numbers 20:11, though it is not an explicit part of the gesture clause itself. An Instrument constituent introduced by *bə* also occurs with *heni'p yad 'al-T_{add}* in Isaiah 11:15 (*wəheni'p yado^w 'al-hannəḥər ba 'yom ru^wḥo^w* "he will elevate his hand against the river

³² Excellent summaries of the various options are given by Philip J. Budd, *Word Biblical Commentary, Volume 5: Numbers* (Waco: Word Books, 1984), 218-19; Jacob Milgrom, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Numbers* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1990), 448-56. Budd and Milgrom come to the same conclusion regarding the nature of Moses' sin, namely that it was claiming for himself and Aaron the power to perform the miracle (i.e., saying *no^wṣi' ləkem məyim* "shall we bring forth water for you," with a first-person verb in reference to himself and Aaron instead of a third-person verb in reference to God).

with the heat of his breath”). However, the constituent in this case is not needed to distinguish the use of *heniʿp yad* in this contextual type from its use in other contextual types.

The Agent of *heriʿm yad bəl* is either Moses or Aaron in the three examples of this phrase, all of which are located in the Pentateuch. (Originally, according to the source critical analysis discussed above, the Agent in Exodus 7:20 may have been Yahweh; the received form of the text, however, clearly casts Aaron as Agent here.) This may be compared with the phrase *nətʿh yad (bəl) ʿal-T*, of which Yahweh is the Agent in twenty-two instances, while his servant is the Agent in twenty-one instances. Although the overall set of instances is thus about evenly divided, if we look only at the Pentateuch (all attested examples are from Exodus), the proportion changes drastically, with only one instance of Yahweh as Agent and fifteen of his servant (Moses or Aaron) as Agent. Therefore, since all of the examples of *heriʿm yad bəl* are located in the Pentateuch, the fact that only Moses and Aaron act as the Agent of the gesture phrase is one more point of similarity to *nətʿh yad (bəl) ʿal-T*. It should be noted that this statistical correspondence is not overly strong, given the relatively small numbers involved and the fact that many examples of *nətʿh yad (bəl) ʿal-T* are part of a single repeating motif. However, the correspondence is certainly not inimical to the idea that the two phrases are synonymous.

It was shown above that the verbs *nətʿh* “extend” and *heniʿp* “elevate,” when used to describe hand gestures in the context of destruction or exertion of supernatural power, are not incompatible semantically. The same is true for *heriʿm* “raise,” which is practically identical to *heniʿp* in describing an upward motion. All three verbs (*heniʿp*, *heriʿm*, and *nətʿh*), when construed with *yad* “hand,” are alike in describing the elevation and extension of the hand away from the trunk of the body. Hebrew usage confirms this assessment. The equation of *heniʿp* and *heriʿm* is evident in the juxtaposition of the two verbs in poetic parallelism in Isaiah 10:15 and

13:2, and the equation of *heri^ym* and *nəṭṭə^h* in the context of a hand gesture is evident in Exodus 14:16, where both verbs are used to describe a single action: *wə ʾattə^h hərem ʾet-maṭṭəkə u^wnəṭe^h ʾet-yəḏəkə ʾal-hayyōm* “as for you, raise your staff, extend your hand against the sea.”

3.2.1.6. *rəmə^h yəd ʾal-T* “Of the Hand, Be High against T”

Closely linked to *heri^ym yəd bəI* is the phrase *rəmə^h yəd ʾal-T* “of the hand, be high against T” (Isaiah 26:11; Micah 5:8), which shares the verbal root *rwm* “be high” and the noun *yəd* “hand.”³³ In the two passages in which *rəmə^h yəd ʾal-T* is attested, the descriptive setting is a prophecy of judgments and destruction. The parallelism in both passages reveals the expected results of the gesture: fire consuming the Target of the gesture (Isaiah 26:11), and the Target of the gesture being “cut off” (*hikkəret*, Micah 5:8). Again, these are consistent with the results of the gesture of destruction or exertion of supernatural power as described elsewhere (cf. “make into a mountain of burning” in Jeremiah 51:25 and *hikri^yt* “cut off” in Ezekiel 14:13; 25:7, 13, 16; Zephaniah 1:4). Neither passage contains any mention of speech accompanying the gesture; indeed, Isaiah 26:11 focuses exclusively on seeing as the relevant channel of communication. The use of the preposition *ʾal* introducing the Target constituent (attested in Micah 5:8) is, once again, comparable to the use of this preposition in other gesture phrases belonging to this contextual type. The Agent of the gesture phrase in Isaiah 26:11 is Yahweh, and that in Micah 5:8 appears to be the remnant of Jacob mentioned in the previous verses, who is viewed as being empowered by Yahweh.

³³ Unlike the five phrases discussed above, the subject of the verb in this phrase is the Sender, the feminine singular *yəd* “hand” (similarly, in the phrase discussed in section 3.2.1.7 below, the subject is the feminine singular *yəmī^yn* “right hand”). Thus the verb in the citation of the gesture phrase is inflected in the third person feminine singular, *rəmə^h* (cf. section 2.1). Care must be taken not to confuse this with the separate verb *rəmə^h* “cast, shoot.”

What has been said above concerning the semantic compatibility between *heriʼm yɔd* and other phrases of this contextual type can also be said about *rɔmɔʰ yɔd*. The verb *heriʼm* is the causative stem of *rwm* and literally means “cause to be high.” A description of the hand as *rɔmɔʰ* “high” implies a previous act of *heriʼm yɔd* “rais[ing] the hand.” The phrase *rɔmɔʰ yɔd ʼal-T* may thus be classed, together with *heriʼm yɔd bəl*, as a synonym of *nɔʔɔʰ yɔd (bəl) ʼal-T*.

3.2.1.7. *rɔmɔʰ yɔmiʼn* “Of the Right Hand, Be High”

Also closely linked to *heriʼm yɔd bəl* “raise the hand with I” and *rɔmɔʰ yɔd ʼal-T* “of the hand, be high against T” is the phrase *rɔmɔʰ yɔmiʼn* “of the right hand, be high,” which occurs only in Psalm 89:14. In this passage, the descriptive setting is a poem addressed to Yahweh in which some of his mythological deeds are recounted, including the overcoming of chaos, the scattering of enemies, and the creation of the earth (Psalm 89:10-13). The gesture phrase in this passage is parallel to *tɔ ʼoz yɔdəkɔ* “your hand is strong” and to a phrase mentioning Yahweh’s mighty arm. There is no mention in the passage of a speech act accompanying the gesture. The context is therefore consistent with the other phrases discussed here, particularly *nɔʔɔʰ zəroʼa* “extend the arm” and *rɔmɔʰ yɔd ʼal-T* “of the hand, be high against T.”

With regard to lexical compatibility with the phrases discussed above, *rɔmɔʰ yɔmiʼn* may be compared with *heriʼm yɔd bəl* and *rɔmɔʰ yɔd ʼal-T* (which use the root *rwm* “be high”) and with *nɔʔɔʰ yɔmiʼn* (which uses the noun *yɔmiʼn* “right hand” for the Sender). In Psalm 89:14, the parallelism with phrases containing the nouns *yɔd* “hand” and *zəroʼa* “arm” underscores the appropriateness of linking this phrase with its nearest contextual parallels, *nɔʔɔʰ zəroʼa* and *rɔmɔʰ yɔd ʼal-T*; indeed, this passage is an example of the semantic affinity between *yɔmiʼn*, *yɔd*, and

zəro^{wa} ‘ as descriptions of the Sender in the gesture of destruction or exertion of supernatural power.

3.2.1.8. *nəśə*’ *yəd/I* ‘*al-T_{add}* “Lift Up the Hand/I against T_{add}”

Another synonymous phrase found in the context of destruction or exertion of supernatural power is *nəśə*’ *yəd/I* ‘*al-T_{add}* “lift up the hand/I against T_{add}” (Isaiah 10:24-26 [2x]; Psalm 10:12). In Isaiah 10:26, there is an explicit reference connecting the gesture in this passage to that performed at the crossing of the sea described in Exodus 14: *u^wmattehu^w* ‘*al-hayyōm* *u^wnəśə*’ *o^w* *bəderək mišrəyim* “and his staff (Yahweh will brandish) against the sea; he will lift it up in the manner of Egypt.” This prophecy is presented as an explanation of Yahweh’s statement, *wə’appi^y* ‘*al-tabli^ytōm* “my anger will be (directed) to their destruction” (Isaiah 10:25); thus the gesture phrase in verse 26 is loosely parallel to “anger” in verse 25. Further, the gesture in verse 24 is connected to that in verse 26 through the use of similar language (the verb *nəśə*’ “lift up,” the direct object *mattehu^w* “his staff,” and the qualifying phrase *bəderək mišrəyim* “in the manner of Egypt”). The gesture phrase in verse 24 has a Target constituent introduced by the preposition ‘*al*, similarly to *nəṭə^h* *yəd* (*bəI*) ‘*al-T*. As discussed in chapter 2, Assyria, the Agent of the gesture in Isaiah 10:24, is described specifically as a representative of Yahweh in the venting of Yahweh’s wrath against his people. Also, there is no mention of speech on the part of the Agent (Assyria or Yahweh) in this passage. The gesture phrase occurring twice in Isaiah 10:24-26 is therefore consistent with *nəṭə^h* *yəd* (*bəI*) ‘*al-T* in terms of descriptive setting, structural alignment, historical reference, lack of accompanying speech, adverbials, and Agent.

It is noteworthy that *nəśə*’ *yəd/I* ‘*al-T_{add}* “lift up the hand/I against T_{add}” in Isaiah 10:24, 26 is in poetic parallelism with *hikkə^h* “smite.” It appears that in these instances, the imagery of

physical smiting is applied figuratively to describe the destruction of Yahweh's people by Assyria (in verse 24) and the destruction of Assyria by Yahweh (in verse 26). That the imagery is that of physical smiting is evident in the use of an instrument (*šebet* "rod" in verse 24; cf. *matte^h* "staff" in verses 24 and 26³⁴) and the fact that the Target is metaphorically described as a concrete entity (the masculine singular "inhabitant of Zion" in verse 24, and the sea in verse 26). As the imagery drawn on in verse 26 appears to be that of the parting of the sea in Israel's exodus from Egypt, Isaiah's conception of this event (at least as portrayed here in Isaiah 10) likely includes a physical striking of the water as part of the ritual gesture.

Compared with Isaiah 10:24-26, there are few contextual indicators to aid in the analysis of *נָסַח* 'yad in Psalm 10:12. The descriptive setting, that of a poetic plea for divine aid, is different from those in which the gesture of destruction or exertion of supernatural power otherwise occurs. However, the descriptive setting of a poetic plea for divine aid is not particularly inimical to narrations and prophecies of divine action. Some examples of Yahweh extending his hand to exert his power are recounted in poetry (cf. Exodus 15:12; Psalm 136:10-12). The Psalmist in Psalm 10:12 may be understood as asking Yahweh to do for him the same kind of powerful deed as those ascribed to Yahweh in narration, prophecy, and song. The context of Psalm 10:12 shows that Yahweh's hoped-for gesture is connected with the destruction of the wicked (see discussion in chapter 2).

The semantic affinity between the verbs *נָסַח* "lift up," *heri^ym* "raise," and *heni^yp* "elevate" is especially close. *נָסַח* ' is juxtaposed with *heri^ym* in poetic parallelism in 2 Kings 19:22 (= Isaiah 37:23) and Isaiah 49:22, and *נָסַח* ' is parallel to both *heri^ym* and *heni^yp* in Isaiah 13:2. Further, what has been said regarding the logical relationship between extending and lifting

³⁴ Verse 5, though it presents some textual and interpretive difficulties, associates the rod and staff symbolically with Yahweh's anger.

the hand in a given context holds with *nəśə' yəd*. There is no strong reason to doubt that *nəśə' yəd/I 'al-T_{add}* can refer to the same gesture as *nəṭə^h yəd (bəI) 'al-T*.

3.2.1.9. *nətan yəd bəT* “Put Forth the Hand against T”

The phrase *nətan yəd bəT* “put forth the hand against T,” which occurs only in Exodus 7:4, may also be considered synonymous with *nəṭə^h yəd (bəI) 'al-T*. The two phrases are linked in Exodus 7:4-5:

Exodus 7:4-5 (4) *wəlo' -yišma' 'alekəm par' o^h wənəṭatti^y 'et-yədi^y bəmišrəyim wəho^wše'ti^y 'et-šib' otay 'et-'ammī^y bəne^y-yiśrə'el me'ereš mišrayim bišpəṭi^ym gədoli^ym* (5) *wəyodə'u^w mišrayim ki^y- 'ani^y YHWH binṭoti^y 'et-yədi^y 'al-mišrəyim wəho^wše'ti^y 'et-bəne^y-yiśrə'el mitto^wkəm*

(4) Pharaoh will not listen to you, **but I will put forth my hand against Egypt** and bring my armies, my people, the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt with great judgments. (5) Egypt will know that I am Yahweh **when I extend my hand against Egypt** and bring the children of Israel out of their midst.

The two phrases here are precisely parallel, each phrase consisting of a verb, a direct object “hand” with a first person singular pronominal suffix, a preposition, and the Target “Egypt.”

Each phrase is also followed by a clause describing bringing the children of Israel out of Egypt, indicating that the gesture is viewed as serving the same purpose in both instances:

Exodus 7:4

*wənəṭatti^y
'et-yədi^y
bəmišrəyim
wəho^wše'ti^y
...bəne^y-yiśrə'el
me'ereš mišrayim*

Exodus 7:5

*binṭoti^y
'et-yədi^y
'al-mišrəyim
wəho^wše'ti^y
'et-bəne^y-yiśrə'el
mitto^wkəm*

I will put forth
my hand
against Egypt
and bring
...the children of Israel
out of the land of Egypt

when I extend
my hand
against Egypt
and bring
the children of Israel
out of their midst

Those who have applied the methods of source criticism to this passage generally agree that the two verses belong to a single source (P), which means that the placing of the two gesture phrases in parallelism is an original feature of the passage.³⁵ The juxtaposition of the two phrases here satisfies many of the criteria of synonymy according to the method outlined above: the two phrases share the same descriptive setting, historical reference, and Agent (Yahweh), and both lack any reference to speech accompanying the gesture. In addition, the phrase *bišpōṭiʿm gādoliʿm* “with great judgments” occurs with *nōtan yōd* in verse 4, describing a means by which Yahweh will bring about Israel’s deliverance; this compares well with Exodus 6:6, where *bišpōṭiʿm gādoliʿm* is conjoined with the phrase *bizroʿ^{wa} nāṭuʿ^wyō^h* “with an extended arm” (see discussion of the latter phrase above).

The gesture phrase *nōtan yōd bəT* differs from the other phrases discussed above in that the preposition *bə*, instead of *ʿal*, is used to introduce the Target. In some of the other phrases already discussed, *bə* is used to introduce an Instrument constituent, but there is no Instrument mentioned with the phrase in Exodus 7:4. Both prepositions, *bə* and *ʿal*, can have a similar hostile sense.³⁶

The verb *nōtan* has a relatively wide semantic range. The most prominent senses in which it is used are those of “give, put, set.” Accordingly, most translators render the phrase in Exodus 7:4 as “I will lay my hand upon Egypt” or similarly. However, as discussed in chapter 2, the verb

³⁵ Noth, *Exodus*, 57; Propp, *Exodus 1-18*, 262.

³⁶ BDB, 89 (definition II.4.a.), 757-58 (definition II.7.d.).

can also mean “put forth, stretch out,” particularly with *yɔd* “hand” as the direct object; in this use, the semantic range of *nɔtan* therefore overlaps with *nɔtɔʰ*.³⁷ The parallelism in Exodus 7:4-5 suggests that the latter sense of *nɔtan* is the one to be preferred here and that the gesture phrase is, in fact, synonymous with *nɔtɔʰ yɔd (bəl) ‘al-T*.

3.2.1.10. *šɔlah yɔd* “Stretch Out the Hand”

Another gesture phrase that may be described as synonymous with *nɔtɔʰ yɔd (bəl) ‘al-T* in the context of destruction or exertion of supernatural power is *šɔlah yɔd* “stretch out the hand” (Exodus 3:20; 9:15; 2 Samuel 24:16). In each of the three relevant passages, the descriptive setting of *šɔlah yɔd* is one of large-scale destruction, and elements of the context show a close relationship between this phrase and *nɔtɔʰ yɔd (bəl) ‘al-T*. In the cases of Exodus 3:20 and 9:15, the descriptive setting refers to bringing about the plagues in Egypt; in the case of 2 Samuel 24:16, the setting is a narrative in which an angel brings about a plague in Jerusalem, and the parallel account of this event in Chronicles uses *nɔtɔʰ yɔd (bəl) ‘al-T* (1 Chronicles 21:16). The three attestations of *šɔlah yɔd* lack any indication of speech accompanying the gesture, and the Agent is either Yahweh (Exodus 3:20; 9:15) or his angel (2 Samuel 24:16).

In the two examples from Exodus, the gesture phrase is followed by a conjoined clause that mentions “smiting” and that includes a prepositional phrase describing an intangible instrument of the smiting:

Exodus 3:20

wəšɔlaḥtiʷ ʿet-yɔdiʷ
wəhikkeʷtiʷ ʿet-miṣrayim
bəkol nipləʷ otay

Exodus 9:15

šɔlaḥtiʷ ʿet-yɔdiʷ
wəʷak ʷoʷtəkə wəʷet-ʷamməkə
baddəber

³⁷ Cf. BDB, 639 (definition 1.a., “stretch out, extend, hand...”), 679 (definition 1.y., “give = stretch out, extend, ...it put out a hand”).

I will stretch out my hand
and smite Egypt
with all my wonders

I would have stretched out my hand
and smitten you and your people
with pestilence

Here the “smiting” appears to be telesthetic rather than physical, since the Target in both cases is a vaguely defined entity, lacking both proximity to the Agent and concreteness, and since the instrument of the “smiting” (wonders in Exodus 3:20, pestilence in Exodus 9:15) is not suitable for physical striking. The “smiting” therefore appears to be a result effected by the stretching out of the hand, which compares with Isaiah 5:25 (see above). In 2 Samuel 24:16, there is a Purpose clause which follows the gesture phrase and which refers to destroying (*šihet*) the city of Jerusalem (cf. Jeremiah 15:6, discussed above, in which *šihet* occurs in a result clause following *hiṭṭə^h yəd* “extend the hand”).

The semantic affinity between *nəṭṭə^h* “extend” and *šolah* “stretch out” hardly requires comment. In some cases, interpreters have understood the latter verb to be used in a telic sense, implying physical contact between participants.³⁸ However, whether such a telic sense is present should follow an analysis of the contextual type and does not, in any case, negate the basic semantic similarity between this verb and *nəṭṭə^h*.

Other examples of the very common basic gesture phrase *šolah yəd* either have been or could be considered synonymous with *nəṭṭə^h yəd (bəl) ‘al-T*. These include Exodus 24:11; Job 1:11, 12; 2:5; and examples in various violent contexts, including rebellion against a king (1 Samuel 24:7, 11; 26:9, 11, 33; 2 Samuel 1:14; Esther 2:21; 3:6; 6:2; 8:7; 9:2, 10, 15, 16). Based on the contextual analysis carried out in chapter 2, the case for inclusion of these other examples is not strong enough, though a synonymous relationship cannot be ruled out in the first four

³⁸ In Genesis 37:22, translators are virtually unanimous in translating the idiom *šolah yəd bəT* as “lay the hand upon T” or similar, but translations of the same idiom in a similar context in 1 Samuel 24:7, 11; 26:9, 11, 23 are mixed, with some rendering as “stretch out the hand against T” or similar and others (particularly in German translations) rendering as “lay the hand upon T” or similar. Cf. E. Lipiński in *TDOT*, 10:95.

examples (Exodus 24:11; Job 1:11, 12; 2:5). These will therefore be discussed below under separate headings.

3.2.1.11. *hešîʿb yɔd ʿal-T* “Turn the Hand against T”

In chapter 2, several examples of the phrase *hešîʿb yɔd ʿal-T* “turn the hand against T” were shown to function in a way similar to other gesture phrases in the context of destruction or exertion of supernatural power (Isaiah 1:25; Amos 1:8; Zechariah 13:7; Psalm 81:15; cf. also Jeremiah 6:9, where the phrase is employed in a wordplay). The phrase in these passages meets many of the contextual criteria for synonymy with *nɔtɔʰ yɔd (bəl) ʿal-T* and with the other phrases discussed above. However, from a semantic standpoint, the two phrases are not synonymous. They do not describe the same motion of the hand; instead, *hešîʿb yɔd ʿal-T* describes the reorientation of the Agent to a new Target for the performance of the gesture.

3.2.1.12. *her ʿɔʰ naḥat zəroʰ* “Display the Might of the Arm”

The phrase *her ʿɔʰ naḥat zəroʰ* “display the might of the arm” (Isaiah 30:30) is similar to *hešîʿb yɔd ʿal-T* in that it refers to a gesture used in the context of destruction or exertion of supernatural power, yet the phrase itself does not share commonality of meaning with *nɔtɔʰ yɔd (bəl) ʿal-T*. Just like other phrases referring to the raised- or extended-hand gesture of destruction or exertion of supernatural power, the descriptive setting in which *her ʿɔʰ naḥat zəroʰ* occurs is a prophecy of large-scale supernatural destruction. The bicolon following that in which the gesture phrase occurs in Isaiah 30:30 mentions five things that are associated with the gesture: *za ʿap ʿap* “raging anger,” *lahab ʿeš ʿowkelɔh* “consuming flame,” *nepes* “storm,” *zərem* “cloudburst,” and

’eben bərād “hailstones.”³⁹ The mention of God’s “raging anger” comports well with other examples of the contextual type of destruction or exertion of supernatural power (see the second item in the list of contextual features in section 3.2.1), and the “consuming flame” has a parallel in another Isaiah passage, Isaiah 26:11, where the gesture phrase is *rəmō^h yād* “of the hand, be high” (see the discussion above, section 3.2.1.6). In addition, there is a thematic connection between *wənaḥat zəro^w ’o^w yar ’ē^h* “he will display the might of his arm” in Isaiah 30:30 and *u^wbəmillē^amo^wt tənu^wpō^h nilḥam-bōm* “he will fight against them in battles of elevating (the hand)” two verses later (Isaiah 30:32). The latter clause seems to employ a variation of the gesture phrase *heni[’]p yād ’al-T_{add}* “elevate the hand against T_{add},” which was shown to be synonymous with *nōṭō^h yād (bəl) ’al-T* “extend the hand against T” (see section 3.2.1.4). Further, the gesture phrase in verse 30 is followed (two bicola later) by a clause with a form of the verb *hikkō^h* “smite,” apparently describing an action performed by the Agent of the gesture phrase, which again provides evidence for the context being that of destruction or exertion of supernatural power (cf. the discussion in section 3.2.1.5).⁴⁰ The Agent of the gesture phrase is Yahweh, as in most other examples of this contextual type.

However, “display the might of the arm” does not mean the same thing as “extend the hand.” There is no problem in equating the Hebrew words *zəro^{(w)a^c}* and *yād*, as discussed above

³⁹ The first word in this bicolon, *za ’ap ’ap* “raging anger,” is preceded by the preposition *bə*; the preposition seems to apply categorically to each of the noun phrases in this bicolon. Most English translations render the preposition *bə* here as “with” or “in.” The precise use of the preposition seems to be that of introducing the instrument or means by which the actions of “causing the majesty of his voice to be heard” and “displaying the might of his arm” are accomplished (BDB, 89, definition III.2.).

⁴⁰ *kī^y-miqqo^wl YHWH yeḥat ’aššū^wr baššebet yakke^h* “for Assyria will be shattered by the voice of Yahweh; he will smite with a rod.” The subject of the second clause is presumably Yahweh; D. Winton Thomas, in the critical apparatus of *BHS*, 721, suggests emending the verb in this clause to *yukke^h* “he (Assyria) will be smitten.” It is also possible that *miqqo^wl* “by the voice” in the first colon is an early textual error for *maqql* “(with) the staff”; this would make for better parallelism with *šebet* “rod” in the second colon (the error could have been influenced by the occurrence of *qo^wlo^w* “his voice” nearby in verse 30). However, to the knowledge of the present writer, the reading *maqql* is not supported by any extant textual witness of Isaiah 30:31 (including the Dead Sea Scrolls text 1QIsa^a, in which the spelling is *mql* and not *mq*), nor has it been suggested in studies of this passage. In any case, the use of the rod as an instrument in the second colon indicates that the “smiting” here is to be taken in a physical sense.

(at the end of section 3.2.1.1); nevertheless, the phrase *her'ṣḥ nahat* “display the might of” refers to a different action, or at least a different aspect of the action, from the verb *nṣṭḥ* “extend.” It is possible that the former phrase refers to the baring of the arm by raising it, thereby causing the sleeve of the robe to slip down. It is at least as probable, however, that “display the might of the arm” refers to the pulling up of the sleeve of the robe to reveal the arm, perhaps as a preparatory act prior to extending the arm.⁴¹ In any case, although a contextual link with the other phrases discussed above is evident, the phrase *her'ṣḥ nahat zəro^a* is at most a circumlocution for extending the hand and is thus ruled out as a synonymous phrase.

3.2.1.13. Distribution of Synonymous Phrases in the Context of Destruction or Exertion of Supernatural Power

We have discussed thirteen phrases that occur in the contextual type of destruction or exertion of supernatural power. Based on their membership in this contextual type and the lack of semantic incompatibility between the phrases themselves, eleven of these phrases may be considered synonymous. These phrases, their frequency, and their distribution may be tabulated as follows:

⁴¹ This issue is generally not addressed in commentaries on this passage, probably because the traditional translation of *nahat* as “descent” tends to prevent the action from being understood as an uncovering of the arm (see chapter 2 for discussion of this word). In commentaries on Isaiah 52:10, in which the idiom *ḥṣap zəro^{wa}* clearly refers to an uncovering of the arm, the action is virtually unanimously understood as a separate action prior to raising the arm: “Yahweh throws back his cloak from his right arm in order that it may not impede him” (James Muilenburg in *IB*, 5:612); “he has thrown back the encumbering folds of his garment in order to be able to use his sword” (R. N. Whybray, *New Century Bible Commentary: Isaiah 40-66* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975], 167-68); “Often a person’s arm would rest in the front fold of their garment, as a hand rests in a pocket. People take out their arm in order to act, baring it as a person might now roll up their sleeves or hitch up their skirt...Metaphorically, so does Yhwh” (John Goldingay, *The Message of Isaiah 40-55: A Literary-Theological Commentary* [London: T&T Clark International, 2005], 457). Indeed, the verb *ḥṣap*, literally “to strip off” (BDB, 362), definitely implies a purposeful action of uncovering. However, in Isaiah 30:30, there is no reason why the “displaying” of the arm could not be a consequence of raising it; the expression would then be a metonym for, rather than a portent of, the raising of the arm.

Table 7. Frequency and Distribution of Synonymous Gesture Phrases in the Context of Destruction or Exertion of Supernatural Power

Full gesture phrase	Attestations	Notes on distribution
<i>nɔʔɔ^h yɔd (bəl)</i> ‘ <i>al-T</i> “extend the hand (with I) against T”	43	Attested only in Biblical Hebrew; heaviest concentration in Exodus (J, P), First Isaiah, and Ezekiel; scattered distribution elsewhere: Jeremiah (2x), Zephaniah (2x), Deuteronomistic History (1x), and Chronicles (1x)
<i>nɔʔɔ^h zəro^a</i> “extend the arm”	15	Attested only in Biblical Hebrew; heaviest concentration in Deuteronomy; scattered distribution elsewhere: Jeremiah (3x), Deuteronomistic History (2x), Ezekiel (2x), Exodus (1x, P), late Psalms (1x: Psalm 136), Chronicles (1x)
<i>heni^yp yɔd ‘al-T_{add}</i> “elevate the hand against T _{add} ”	4	First Isaiah (3x), Zechariah (1x)
<i>šolah yɔd</i> “stretch out the hand”	3+	Exodus (2x, both J), Deuteronomistic History (1x); possibly others in Exodus (J or E) and Job; phrase attested in other contextual types in Hebrew (very frequently), Ugaritic, Phoenician, and possibly Old Aramaic
<i>hiʔʔ^h yɔd</i> “extend the hand”	3	First Isaiah (1x), Jeremiah (2x)
<i>heri^ym yɔd bəl</i> “raise the hand with I”	3	Pentateuch: Exodus (2x, both J/JE), Numbers (1x, P)
<i>nɔsɔ^y yɔd/I ‘al-T_{add}</i> “lift up the hand/I against T _{add} ”	3	First Isaiah (2x), Psalm 10
<i>rɔmɔ^h yɔd ‘al-T</i> “of the hand, be high against T”	2	First Isaiah, Micah
<i>nɔʔɔ^h yɔmi^yn</i> “extend the right hand”	1	Archaic Hebrew poetry (Exodus 15)
<i>nɔtan yɔd bəT</i> “put forth the hand against T”	1	Exodus (P)
<i>rɔmɔ^h yɔmi^yn</i> “of the right hand, be high”	1	Psalm 89

The phrase *nṣṭṣ^h yṣd (bəl)* ‘*al-T*’ “extend the hand (with I) against T” occurs frequently in Exodus and Isaiah but never in Deuteronomy, while *nṣṭṣ^h zəro^a* “extend the arm” (or, more specifically, the formula *zəro^a nəṭu^wyṣ^h* “extended arm”) occurs several times in Deuteronomy but only once in Exodus (in P) and never in Isaiah.⁴² This situation of what appears to be complementary distribution could mean that the two idioms were characteristic of different stages, dialects, or sociolects of Hebrew. However, the two phrases occur together and are even intermingled in Jeremiah (see above), so it is evident that the two phrases were in current and synonymous usage by the period immediately preceding the Babylonian exile. Both phrases also appear in mutually similar contexts in Ezekiel, Chronicles, and other late biblical books.

More salient than the differences in distribution of the above phrases is their co-occurrence in the same literary sources. No fewer than five of these phrases (*nṣṭṣ^h yṣd (bəl)* ‘*al-T*’, *hiṭṭṣ^h yṣd*, *heni^yp yṣd* ‘*al-T_{add}*’, *nṣṣṣ[’] yṣd/I* ‘*al-T_{add}*’, and *rṣmṣ^h yṣd* ‘*al-T*’) occur in First Isaiah, always in reference to God’s execution of judgments upon his people and upon other nations. In addition, five of these phrases (*nṣṭṣ^h yṣd (bəl)* ‘*al-T*’, *šṣlah yṣd*, *heri^ym yṣd bəl*, *nṣṭṣ^h yṣmi^yn*, and *nṣtan yṣd bəT*) occur in the plague narrative of Exodus; sometimes two phrases are in close proximity in the text and have reference to the very same gesture event. In some instances, this confluence of gesture idioms may be due to the redaction of variant sources (as in Exodus 7:19-20), but in other instances this is not the case (as in Exodus 7:4-5). There is no consistent indication that any one these phrases is proper to a specific documentary source; the common phrase *nṣṭṣ^h yṣd (bəl)* ‘*al-T*’ is attested in both J and P, and the phrases which are attested in only one source (such as *nṣtan yṣd bəT*, only in P) have too few attestations overall to attribute significance to the distribution. Although Exodus 7:19-20 shows the juxtaposition of *nṣṭṣ^h yṣd*

⁴² Cf. Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 329, who identifies the formula *yṣd ḥ^azṣṣṣ^h u^wzəro^a nəṭu^wyṣ^h* “a strong hand and an outstretched arm” as “Deuteronomistic phraseology” connected with the Deuteronomistic themes of exodus, covenant, and election.

(*bəI*) *ʿal-T* from the P source and *heriʿm yəd bəI* from the J source, one notes that both phrases are attested in portions of the Pentateuch belonging to both J and P. In summary, then, aside from the lone case of the formula *zəroʿ nətuʿyḥ*, there is no solid basis for ascribing the different phrases used in this contextual type to different stages or dialects of Hebrew. As far as can be discerned, the majority of these phrases were used contemporaneously and synonymously in Hebrew throughout the biblical period.

Nevertheless, it would not be entirely accurate to describe the distribution of these phrases as free distribution. The choice of certain phrases may have been conditioned by stylistic factors. As was pointed out in chapter 2, the use of the phrase *šəlah yəd* in the context of destruction or exertion of supernatural power coincides in at least some instances with a wordplay involving the root *šlh* “send.” Similarly, it is possible that the frequent use of *nəṭṭḥ yəd* in Exodus is related to the word for the Instrument used in the gesture, Moses’ *matṭeʿ* “staff” (both *nəṭṭḥ* and *matṭeʿ* are from the root *nty*). The phrase *nəṭṭḥ zəroʿ* is by far the most common gesture idiom that occurs as a noun phrase following the preposition *bə* “with” (in the formula *zəroʿ nətuʿyḥ* “extended arm”); this idiom occurs very frequently in lists describing the means by which Yahweh delivers his people.

It is also likely, indeed almost certain, that there existed slight differences in semantic nuance between the ten phrases discussed here. Such differences in semantic nuance may have been a factor in choosing which gesture idiom to use. A hint of this may be found in the poetic parallelism between *baššebet yakkekḥ* “he will smite you with a rod” and *uʿmatṭehuʿ yiššəʿ-ʿləyḥ* “he will lift up his staff against you” in Isaiah 10:24, 26. Based on this passage, one could suggest that *nəṭṭḥ yəd/I ʿal-T_{add}* was thought to include or imply the notion of smiting, while this notion had to be expressed by means of a conjoined verb with some of the other gesture phrases.

For the most part, the shades of meaning associated with the various gesture phrases are impossible to identify with certainty in the absence of living speakers of ancient Hebrew. Variation in nuance is allowed in the definition of synonymy described at the beginning of this chapter, given that there is also (limited) variation in the contexts in which the phrases occur. To be sure, the contexts are similar enough that the basic synonymy of the phrases can be established, as has been shown at length; however, it is an unavoidable fact that no two phrases occur in identical contexts.

3.2.2. The Oath Gesture of Raising One Hand: *nʿśw' yʿd (+adv)_{oath}* “Lift Up the Hand (+adv)_{oath}”

Another frequently encountered contextual type to which several gesture phrases belong is that of oath-taking. The most commonly attested full gesture phrase in this context occurs in three variations: *nʿśw' yʿd ləT_{add} ləP_{obl}* “lift up the hand to T_{add} to P_{obl}” (Exodus 6:8; Numbers 14:30; Ezekiel 20:5-6 [3x], 15, 23, 28, 42; 47:14; Psalm 106:26-27; Nehemiah 9:15), *nʿśw' yʿd ʿel-T_{dir}* “lift up the hand to T_{dir}” (Deuteronomy 32:40-41), and *nʿśw' yʿd ʿal-T_{ref}* “lift up the hand concerning T_{ref}” (Ezekiel 44:12; cf. Ezekiel 36:7, where *nʿśw' yʿd* occurs without an explicit T_{ref} constituent, but a third-person referent is mentioned in the next clause). As discussed in chapter 2, despite small contextual differences between these three variations, it is not necessary to posit more than one contextual type, since the differences are not mutually exclusive from a logical standpoint. For the purpose of avoiding too much clutter, the three variant full gesture phrases belonging to this contextual type will be referred to together as *nʿśw' yʿd (+adv)_{oath}* “lift up the hand (+adv)_{oath}.”

The aspects of context that are characteristic of the fifteen examples in which this phrase occurs are the following:

1. The descriptive setting in most cases is a first-person utterance by Yahweh concerning his performance of an oath. This can be a description of a past oath or an actual oath utterance (“I lift up my hand [and swear]”). In two cases, however, Yahweh’s oath is recounted in the third person (Psalm 106:26-27) and the second person (Nehemiah 9:15). Twelve of the examples of this phrase refer to Yahweh’s promise to bring (or not to bring) Israel into the land of Canaan, but references to other oaths are also found (Deuteronomy 32:40-41; Ezekiel 36:7; 44:12). The nature of the oath itself can be friendly and beneficial to the Target, or it can be hostile, regardless of whether the bringing of Israel into the promised land is referred to.
2. There is no substantial evidence for *נָסַחַּ יָד (+adv)_{oath}* being put in parallelism with other phrases in a consistent way. In Ezekiel 20:5, the gesture phrase is conjoined with phrases describing Yahweh’s choosing of Israel and his manifesting of himself to them, but this does not appear to be a consistent feature of this contextual type.
3. As discussed above in item 1, a large subset of the examples of *נָסַחַּ יָד (+adv)_{oath}* have specific reference to a series of discrete oath events that are part of Israel’s historical memory. These events include Yahweh’s oath to give Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob the promised land (Exodus 6:8; cf. Genesis 12:7; 13:15, 17; 15:7, 18; 26:3-4; 28:4, 13; 35:12), his oath to bring Israel out of Egypt and settle them in the land (Numbers 14:30; Ezekiel 20:5-6, 28; Nehemiah 9:15; cf. Exodus 3:16-17; 6:8), and his oath to not bring Israel into the promised land and to felle them in the wilderness (Ezekiel 20:15, 23; Psalm 106:26-27; cf. Numbers 14:23, 28-35).⁴³ However, *נָסַחַּ יָד (+adv)_{oath}* is also used to refer to oath events outside of this series of oaths involving the promised land.
4. There are no clear data on result clauses connected with *נָסַחַּ יָד (+adv)_{oath}*. Occasionally, a clause preceded by the conjunction *wə* follows the gesture clause, but it is doubtful that this clause bears a cause-and-effect relationship to the gesture phrase.⁴⁴ The function of the uplifted hand gesture is more clearly

⁴³ The oath concerning Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob may be understood as at least three discrete oaths made to each of these patriarchs, or it may be understood as a single oath made to Abraham regarding his seed. In connection with the latter possibility, it may be noted that the verb “give” in Genesis 12:7; 13:15, 17; 15:7; 17:8; 26:3-4; 28:4, 13; 35:12 always refers to a time other than the time of speaking; only in Genesis 15:18 do we see an actual performative giving of the land: “On that day Yahweh made a covenant with Abram, saying, ‘I hereby give (*נֹתַתִּי*) this land to your seed, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates.” It is interesting that both Yahweh’s beneficent oath in Exodus 6:8 and his hostile oath around Numbers 14:30 make reference to the previous oaths, so that there is explicit continuity in the chain of oaths. In Ezekiel 20:42 and 47:14, there is ambiguous reference to an oath to Israel’s “ancestors” to give them the land; this could be the oath to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, or it could be the oath to the Israelites described in Exodus 6:8. On the historical reference in Ezekiel 20:5-6, cf. Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1-24* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 626-27; Katheryn Pfisterer Darr in *NIB*, 6:1277-78.

⁴⁴ In Deuteronomy 32:40, the verb *wə ʿmartī* “and I say” following the gesture phrase appears to introduce speech that is concurrent with the gesture, not necessarily a result of the gesture. In Ezekiel 44:12, the clause *wə nāsā ʾu* “*wonəm* “they shall bear their iniquity” follows the gesture phrase as the spoken content of the oath; the fact that the Levites will bear their iniquity could well be understood as a result of the spoken oath or of other actions to be taken by Yahweh rather than as a result of the uplifted hand gesture.

seen in purpose clauses that are part of the full gesture phrase (see item 6 below).

5. A major characteristic of this contextual type is the presence of direct or indirect speech describing a promise undertaken by the Agent. When the speech is direct, it is characterized by oath formulae: *ḥay ʿonoki* “by my life” (Deuteronomy 32:40), *ʿim* “if” followed by a completed or uncompleted conditional clause (Deuteronomy 32:41; Ezekiel 36:7), and/or explicit mention of the hand gesture as an “instantaneous perfective” *nōśō ʿtī ʿet-yōdī* “I lift up my hand” (Ezekiel 36:7; 44:12).
6. The full gesture phrase often includes a purpose clause headed by an infinitive construct verb and introduced by the preposition *lā* “to”; this clause describes the oath obligation undertaken by the Agent.⁴⁵ Despite the fact that all of the examples containing a purpose clause are situated within the circumscribed context of Yahweh’s promises to Israel’s ancestors, a relatively wide range of verbs is attested: “give” (Exodus 6:8; Ezekiel 20:28, 42; 47:14; Nehemiah 9:15), “settle” (Numbers 14:30), “bring out” (Ezekiel 20:6), “not bring” (Ezekiel 20:15), “disperse” (Ezekiel 20:23), “fell” (Psalm 106:26-27), and “scatter” (Psalm 106:27).
7. Adverbial constituents that form part of the full gesture phrase, aside from the Purpose constituent described above in item 6, include the following: a Target/Addressee preceded by the preposition *lā* “to” (*lāT_{add}*), a Target/Directional preceded by *ʿel-* “to” (*ʿel-T_{dir}*), and a Target/Referenced preceded by *ʿal* “concerning” (*ʿal-T_{ref}*).
8. The Agent is always Yahweh in the attested examples of *nōśō ʿyōd (+adv)_{oath}*.

Some remarks regarding item 8 are in order. As will be seen below, other gesture phrases used in oath contexts have a human Agent. The issue of whether these phrases are synonymous raises the question of whether the divine Agent in the above examples of *nōśō ʿyōd (+adv)_{oath}* is a defining characteristic of this contextual type or merely an accident of preservation. It does not seem impossible that, in spoken Hebrew of the biblical period, *nōśō ʿyōd (+adv)_{oath}* was used to refer to oaths taken by Agents other than God.⁴⁶ Another possibility is that other phrases were synonymous with *nōśō ʿyōd (+adv)_{oath}* in all respects except the identity of the Agent, the latter

⁴⁵ Exodus 6:8; Numbers 14:30; Ezekiel 20:6, 15, 23, 28, 42; 47:14; Psalm 106:26-27; Nehemiah 9:15.

⁴⁶ Ackroyd, in *TDOT*, 5:424, argues the converse: “The fact that in a few cases a particular phrase appears only with reference to human beings would be a dubious basis for saying that it could not be used of the deity or that it was deliberately avoided. Thus *nāśā ʿyāq*, “swear an oath,” is used of both; *rūm* (hiphil) *yāq* is used only of human persons (Gen. 14:22). It would be fallacious reasoning to assume that the latter could not also be used of the deity.” We agree with the spirit of this statement, even though Ackroyd is incorrect in stating that *nōśō ʿyōd* as a description of an oath gesture is used of both deities and humans.

phrase being reserved for actions performed by deity. According to the definition of synonymy adhered to in this study (see above), these other phrases could still be included in the same contextual type and could be considered synonymous. Unlike the gesture of destruction or exertion of supernatural power, lifting the hand in oath-taking has no evident function that would depend on the Agent being divine or having access to divine power. We therefore accept as synonymous with *נָסַח׳ יָד (+adv)_{oath}* those phrases that are contextually similar in other respects but that have a human Agent, despite the predominance of a divine Agent in attested examples of *נָסַח׳ יָד (+adv)_{oath}*.

We take the following three phrases to be synonymous with *נָסַח׳ יָד (+adv)_{oath}*: *הִרִי׳ם יָד ׳עַל-ת* “raise the hand toward T,” *נָתַן יָד לַפּ׳ֹבֵל* “put forth the hand to P_{obl},” and *הִנִּי׳פּ יָד ׳אַל-תְּרַעַף* “elevate the hand concerning T_{ref}.” Many scholars have suggested connections of synonymy among these phrases, especially the first two (*נָסַח׳ יָד (+adv)_{oath}* and *הִרִי׳ם יָד ׳עַל-ת*).⁴⁷ The synthesis undertaken here shows, based on a systematic analysis of context, that these proposals are plausible, though they are not all equally certain.

3.2.2.1. *הִרִי׳ם יָד ׳עַל-ת* “Raise the Hand toward T”

The earliest example of a hand gesture associated with oath-taking in the Hebrew Bible, at least in terms of the order of the canon, is *הִרִי׳ם יָד ׳עַל-ת* “raise the hand toward T” in Genesis 14:22-23.⁴⁸ Here the descriptive setting is a narration of an act performed by Abram.

⁴⁷ Viberg, *Symbols of Law*, 19 (connecting *הִרִי׳ם יָד*, *נָסַח׳ יָד*, and *הִנִּי׳פּ יָד*); Falk, “Gestures Expressing Affirmation,” 269; Ackroyd in *TDOT*, 5:411; Burke in *ISBE*, 451; Seely, “Raised Hand of God,” 411 (all connecting *הִרִי׳ם יָד* and *נָסַח׳ יָד*).

⁴⁸ The date of composition of Genesis 14 is unknown but likely early. Martin Noth, *A History of Pentateuchal Traditions* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1981), 154, views Genesis 14 as a “late ‘scholarly’ composition,” yet this view is far from certain. Cf. Noth’s statement in *ibid.*, 28n84: “The question of the source to which Gen. 14 belongs is as completely obscure today as it has been in the past.” There are contextual links between Genesis 14 and the surrounding J narrative, and the fact that Genesis 14 mentions a war between kings of various lands (most of which

The gesture phrase itself is either a description of a past event or part of an actual oath utterance (see discussion in chapter 2). Abram’s speech following the description of the gesture includes the oath formula *’im* “if” followed by an uncompleted conditional clause. If the passage is interpreted as an actual oath utterance, then the explicit mention of the hand gesture is also an oath formula. The gesture phrase includes a Target (“Yahweh El Elyon”) preceded by the preposition *’el-* “to”; if an actual oath utterance is described, this constituent may be analyzed as a Target/Directional, similar to the *’el-T_{dir}* constituent used with *nšw’ yd (+adv)_{oath}*; otherwise it could be a Target/Addressee constituent, which would be unlike *nšw’ yd (+adv)_{oath}*, in which the Target/Addressee constituent is signalled by the preposition *lə*.

Semantically, there is no major difference between *nšw’* “lift up” and *heri’^m* “raise,” given that the context is that of performing a hand gesture. Further, if the adverbial *’el-T* functions the same way in *nšw’ yd (+adv)_{oath}* and in *heri’^m yd ’el-T*, then a comparison between Deuteronomy 32:40 and Genesis 14:22 would strengthen the semantic link between the phrases, since both *’el-šwmayim* “to the sky” in the former passage and *’el-YHWH ’el ’elyoⁿ* “to Yahweh El Elyon” in the latter would indicate upward directionality. In any case, the evidence from these phrases does not prevent their being viewed as synonymous.

3.2.2.2. *nštan yd ləP_{obl}* “Put Forth the Hand to P_{obl}”

A second phrase that may be viewed as synonymous with *nšw’ yd (+adv)_{oath}* is *nštan yd ləP_{obl}* “put forth the hand to P_{obl}” (Ezra 10:18-19). The descriptive setting in which this phrase is found is an account having to do with priests who had married foreign women. The passage describes how the priests agree to make restitution for this offense. There is one

lands were probably well-known and are mentioned in the J portions of Genesis 10) is hardly evidence of late or “scholarly” origin.

significant contextual indicator that links *nʕtan yʕd ləP_{obl}* in this passage with *nʕśʕʕʕ yʕd (+adv)_{oath}*, namely a Purpose constituent that follows the basic gesture phrase, is introduced by the preposition *lə*, and describes the obligation undertaken by the Agent: *ləhoʕšīʕʕ nʕšeʕhem* “to send away their wives.” The brevity of the description of the event in Ezra 10:18-19 makes it impossible to compare other contextual elements; for example, there is no record of words spoken by the priests, and a Target constituent is lacking. However, the Purpose/Obligation constituent introduced by *lə* is sufficient to identify the contextual type as that of oath-taking, since only oath gestures logically entail an obligation for the one performing the gesture.⁴⁹

Another possible instance of *nʕtan yʕd* as an oath gesture is found in Ezekiel 17:18, in which the king of Judah is accused of having broken a treaty with the king of Babylon despite having “put forth his hand” (*nʕtan yʕdoʕ*). The gesture here may also be analyzed as that of pledging allegiance, a different contextual type. Because of this ambiguity and the fact that the basic gesture phrase occurs without any modifying constituents, this passage has little to contribute to the discussion regarding the synonymy of *nʕtan yʕd*.

Both the semantic range of the verb *nʕtan*, which includes the notion of putting forth and stretching out (particularly with the direct object “hand”), and the logical relationship between extending and raising the hand were discussed above (see 2.1.4. and 2.1.8.). Provided that *nʕtan* is translated as “put forth,” the phrases *nʕśʕʕʕ yʕd* and *nʕtan yʕd* share the general sense of moving the hand away from the body, and many hand motions could be described using either phrase. Therefore, despite the fact that some interpreters have viewed the phrase in Ezra 10:18-

⁴⁹ As noted in chapter 2, several modern translations (including NIV and RSV as well as French and Italian translations) recognize the gesture in Ezra 10:18-19 as one of giving a pledging or taking an oath.

19 as describing a handclasp,⁵⁰ we are inclined to view *nōśō' yōd (+adv)_{oath}* and *nōtan yōd ləP_{obl}* as synonymous phrases describing a raising or putting-forth of the hand.

3.2.2.3. *heni'p yōd 'al-T_{ref}* “Elevate the Hand concerning T_{ref}”

Slightly less certain than the preceding two phrases is the synonymous relationship of the phrase *heni'p yōd 'al-T_{ref}* “elevate the hand concerning T_{ref}” (Job 31:21-22). According to our contextual analysis and the majority of interpreters, this phrase denotes a performative legal action against somebody; it may denote an oath. In the latter analysis, it would be synonymous with *nōśō' yōd (+adv)_{oath}*. The descriptive setting in Job 31:21-22, namely Job’s profession of innocence including not having performed this gesture against an orphan, is somewhat similar to many examples of *nōśō' yōd (+adv)_{oath}* in that the (hypothetical) gesture is described in the first person and as having taken place in the past (using a perfective verb form). The gesture act is perceived as having negative consequences for the Target, similarly to Ezekiel 36:7 and 44:12. However, the fact that the action described in Job 31:21-22 is itself put within the framework of a negative oath is different from *nōśō' yōd (+adv)_{oath}*, as well as from the other phrases discussed above.

There is no mention of speech accompanying the gesture in Job 31:21-22, nor is there a Purpose constituent following the gesture phrase. These omissions could be due to the brevity of the description in this passage. One argument in favor of a synonymous relationship with *nōśō' yōd (+adv)_{oath}*, aside from the general legal context, is the presence of a Target constituent

⁵⁰ Falk, “Gestures Expressing Affirmation,” 268; Viberg, *Symbols of Law*, 33, 37-40. Seely, “Raised Hand of God,” 418, admits both possibilities for the interpretation of this idiom: “This gesture [denoted by *ntn yd*] could also be a handshake of some sort or could be similar to raising the hand, although the verb *ntn* has no particular sense of ‘raising.’” While it is true that the verb does not directly denote “raise,” a hand that is “put forth” is logically in a raised rather than a resting position.

preceded by the preposition *‘al* and apparently denoting the Target/Referenced. The apparent *‘al-T_{ref}* constituent compares well with *נָסַוּ יָדוֹ ‘al-T_{ref}* in Ezekiel 44:12.

Just as the verb *heri^ym* is practically identical in meaning with *נָסַוּ* in the context of a hand gesture, so *heni^yp* is synonymous with these two. We have seen these three verbs, together with *nōtan*, used in synonymous gesture phrases in the context of destruction or exertion of supernatural power, so their synonymy in the context of oath-taking is not unparalleled nor particularly problematic.

3.2.2.4. Distribution of Synonymous Phrases in the Context of Oath-Taking

Thus we have four full gesture phrases used to express an oath-taking gesture of raising one hand. These may be tabulated as follows:

Table 8. Frequency and Distribution of Synonymous Gesture Phrases in the Context of Oath-Taking

Full gesture phrase	Attestations	Notes on distribution
<i>נָסַוּ יָדוֹ (+adv)_{oath}</i> “lift up the hand (+adv) _{oath} ”	15	Heaviest concentration in Ezekiel (10x); scattered distribution elsewhere in Hebrew, mostly late: Exodus and Numbers (1x each, both P), Deuteronomy 32 (poetry), Psalm 106, Nehemiah
<i>nōtan yād ləP_{obl}</i> “put forth the hand to P _{obl} ”	1+	Ezra, possibly Ezekiel (both late)
<i>heri^ym yād ‘el-T</i> “raise the hand toward T”	1	Genesis 14
<i>heni^yp yād ‘al-T_{ref}</i> “elevate the hand concerning T _{ref} ”	1	Job (date uncertain)

The latter three phrases have only one attestation each, so that conclusions concerning their distribution would be hazardous. It is tempting to posit a diachronic shift in usage whereby *heri^ym yād ‘el-T* is replaced by *נָסַוּ יָדוֹ (+adv)_{oath}*, then finally this gives way to *nōtan yād*

ləP_{obl}, the second phrase being retained mainly in reference to Yahweh's promise to the ancestors regarding the land (Nehemiah 9:15). However, it is also possible that some or all of these phrases (together with *heni^yp yəd 'al-T_{ref}*) were used concurrently, despite the fact that this is not reflected in the limited sources at our disposal.

Aside from diachronic considerations, two oddities of the distribution of *nəśə' yəd (+adv)_{oath}* are worthy of remark. Both Lust and Seely have noted (apparently independently) that Ezekiel and the P source seem to prefer the expression *nəśə' yəd (+adv)_{oath}* when describing Yahweh's oaths, while Deuteronomy prefers the verb *nišba* ' "swear."⁵¹ As was noted in chapter 2, the conclusion that Lust draws from this distribution, namely that Ezekiel and the P source purposely avoided attributing the verb *nišba* ' to Yahweh for theological reasons, cannot be sustained. In addition to the use of *nəśə' yəd (+adv)_{oath}*, Ezekiel does attribute oaths to Yahweh, including one instance with the verb *nišba* ' (Ezekiel 16:8). Nevertheless, this distribution does appear to reflect a linguistic or stylistic difference between the priestly and Deuteronomic traditions. Specifically, it could reflect an absence of the gesture phrase from the language of oath-taking in the dialect, sociolect, or stage of Hebrew represented by the Deuteronomic tradition, or it could be a matter of literary style, the priestly tradition tending toward the vivid imagery of the gesture phrase and the Deuteronomic tradition preferring the speech act verb. The data, however, are too limited to be sure which is the case.

The second oddity is that the instances in which *nəśə' yəd (+adv)_{oath}* is used describe only Yahweh taking an oath, while each of the other phrases describes only humans taking oaths. This may be only coincidence. It is also possible that *nəśə' yəd (+adv)_{oath}* had some nuance that made it more appropriate for divine oaths. Such a difference in nuance would not jeopardize the basic

⁵¹ Johan Lust, "Ez., XX, 4–26 une parodie de l'histoire religieuse d'Israël," *ETL* 43 (1967): 520-22; Seely, "Raised Hand of God," 413.

synonymy of these four gesture phrases used in the context of oath-taking. As discussed above, some variation in context and in semantic nuance is expected, and this variation does not overrule the conclusion that the phrases are synonymous, so long as the variation in context is limited and the phrases share “the same general sense.”

3.2.3. Non-Ritual or Ambiguous Types

Some groups of synonymous gesture phrases occur in contextual types that are non-ritual or are ambiguous as to whether their nature is ritual. The individual phrases in these groups are often similar to those discussed above in that they share the same basic gesture phrase. Although non-ritual gestures are tangential to the focus of this study, it is useful to briefly discuss these phrases in order to provide a complete account of the synonymy of gesture phrases.

3.2.3.1. The Gesture of Rebellion or Defiance

Several phrases are used to describe a gesture of rebellion, haughty display, and/or defiant action. These phrases include *heri'm yad bəT* “raise the hand against T” (1 Kings 11:26-27 [2x]) and *nəśə' yad bəT* “lift up the hand against T” (2 Samuel 18:28; 20:21; pAmherst 63 xxii 3 [with *l T* instead of *bT*]). In all the examples of these two full phrases, the context refers to rebellion against a king or higher authority.

The phrase *rəm^h yad* “of the hand, be high” likewise denotes defiant action in the sight of a higher authority or of God. The formula *bəyad rəm^h* “with a high hand” is used in Exodus 14:8; Numbers 15:30; 33:3 to describe the manner by which the children of Israel left their former masters as they went out of Egypt and to describe the manner by which one commits willful sin, and Deuteronomy 32:27 describes Israel’s enemies as boasting that their “hand is

high; it is not Yahweh who did all this.” In the case of one who sins “with high hand” (Numbers 15:30), the action is described as being equivalent to blaspheming Yahweh, and it is punishable by the person being “cut off from [the] people.” Also comparable in this context is *nṯṯḥ yḏd ʿel-T* “extend the hand against T” in Job 15:24-25, which signifies a wicked man’s rebellion or haughty display against God.

There are thus four phrases used in the context of rebellion or defiant action against a higher authority: *heriʿm yḏd bəT* “raise the hand against T,” *nṯṯḥ yḏd bəT* “lift up the hand against T,” *rṯmḥ yḏd* “of the hand, be high,” and *nṯṯḥ yḏd ʿel-T* “extend the hand against T.” It is interesting that three of the verbs used in these phrases (*heriʿm*, *nṯṯḥ*, and *rṯmḥ*) refer to the upward movement or high position of the hand. It is likely that the use of these phrases in most of the examples, if not all of them, is merely figurative. Nevertheless, it is possible that the symbolic association of high-handedness with defiance applies in concrete ritual contexts as well (contrast, perhaps, the phrase *nṯan yḏd taḥat T* “put forth the hand in submission to T” in 1 Chronicles 29:23-24, which denotes a pledge of allegiance).

We may also discuss here the phrase *šḥlah yḏd bəT* “stretch out the hand against T.” This phrase occurs in two main contexts. The first is a series of passages in 1-2 Samuel describing hypothetical acts of violence against the king or “anointed of Yahweh,” which are explicitly described as taboo (1 Samuel 24:7, 11; 26:9, 11, 33; 2 Samuel 1:14);⁵² the second is another series of passages in Esther that describe acts of violence against humans or plunder of goods (Esther 2:21; 3:6; 6:2; 8:7; 9:2, 10, 15, 16). In addition to these passages, there are sporadic attestations of this full gesture phrase in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Ugaritic, usually with some connotation of greedy or hostile intent on the part of the Agent. The use of the phrase in the first

⁵² Cf. the expression *ḥṣliṯḥ lliv meYHWH* “Yahweh forbid me” (1 Samuel 24:7; 26:11), with *ḥṣliṯḥ* from the root *ḥll* “pollute, defile, profane” (BDB, 320-21); also the statement in 1 Samuel 26:9, “for who has stretched out his hand against the anointed of Yahweh and been free of guilt?”

context, that of violent acts against a king, is similar to *heriʿm yad bəT* and *nəśōʿ yad bəT* in the use of the preposition *bə* and in the royal identity of the Target. However, it is also possible to view this use of the phrase simply in terms of violent action against a human being, which would make this use of the phrase more compatible with the other examples just described. It is perhaps best to view *šolah yad bəT* as belonging to a separate contextual type of which some uses are similar to the contextual type of rebellion or defiance against a higher authority.

3.2.3.2. Raising the Hand to Summon

Another pair of synonymous gesture phrases describes a signal to gather. The phrases are *heniʿp yad* “elevate the hand” (Isaiah 13:2) and *nəśōʿ yad ʿel-T_{add}* “lift up the hand to T_{add}” (Isaiah 49:22). The descriptive setting of both phrases is similar: a prophecy describing the rallying or gathering of people to a standard. In Isaiah 13:2, *heniʿp yad* is parallel to *šəʿuʿ-nes* “lift up a standard,” and in Isaiah 49:22, *nəśōʿ yad ʿel-T_{add}* is parallel to *wəʿel-ʿammīʿm ʿəriʿm nissiʿ* “I will raise my standard to the peoples.” Result clauses following the two gesture phrases are also similar. The verb in the result clause in Isaiah 13:2, *wəyṅbo ʿuʿ pithəʿ nadiʿbiʿm* “that they may come to the Noble Gate,” and that in Isaiah 49:22, *wəhebiʿ ʿuʿ bənayik bəḥoṣen* “they will bring your sons on the bosom,” both share the root *b*ʿ “come.”

The Agent of the gesture in Isaiah 49:22 is Yahweh. In Isaiah 13:2, it is less clear who exactly the Agent, who is also the addressee of the prophetic command in this passage, is. Possibilities that have been suggested include Yahweh’s angelic host, an army of Israelites, and the Medes.⁵³ In any case, in the context of this passage, the Agent is viewed as a group of people who are loyal to Yahweh and who are in a position both to take orders from Yahweh and to issue

⁵³ Young, *Book of Isaiah, Volume I*, 415-16; Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, 247; Gene M. Tucker in *NIB*, 6:156.

orders to others. The Agents in the two passages may be seen as compatible; both Yahweh and the unidentified addressee of Isaiah 13:2 act in the role of issuing a command to gather.

Semantically, the verbs *heniḥp* and *nośoʿ* present no obstacle to the idea that the gesture phrases *heniḥp yad* “elevate the hand” and *nośoʿ yad ʿel-T_{add}* “lift up the hand to T_{add}” are synonymous. In this case, the affinity between the two verbs is confirmed by the parallelism in Isaiah 13:2 between *honiḥpu^w yad* “elevate the hand” and *śoʿ u^w-nes* “lift up a standard.”

3.2.4. Phrases Whose Synonymous Relationship Is Uncertain

3.2.4.1. Raising or Extending One Hand

There are four phrases, all in Biblical Hebrew, that describe raising or extending one hand but whose membership in one of the groups of synonymous phrases described above is uncertain. Though the synonymous relationships established above show varying degrees of certainty, these four phrases are especially questionable due to ambiguity in the context and are therefore generally excluded from the analysis. They are mentioned here for the sake of completeness.

Table 9. Phrases Describing the Raising or Extending of One Hand in Ambiguous Context

Full phrase	Translation	References	Comment on contextual type
<i>heniʾp yəd ʾel-T</i>	“elevate the hand toward T”	2 Kings 5:11	Possibly destruction or exertion of supernatural power, but problematic because attributed to a non-Israelite, possibly caricatured.
<i>nətan yəd</i>	“put forth the hand”	Ezekiel 17:18	Oath-taking, or pledge of allegiance
<i>šəlah yəd</i>	“stretch out the hand”	Psalms 138:7	Possibly destruction or exertion of supernatural power, but insufficient contextual indicators.
<i>šəlah yəd ʾel-T</i>	“stretch out the hand against T”	Exodus 24:11; Job 1:11, 12; 2:5	Possibly destruction or exertion of supernatural power, or possibly prelude to contact.

For discussion of each of these phrases and the possibilities for interpretation, the reader is referred to chapter 2.

3.2.4.2. Baring the Arm

Three expressions describing the baring of the arm were discussed in chapter 2: *ḥəšap zəro^a* “uncover the arm” (Isaiah 52:10; Ezekiel 4:7), *ḥer ʾəḥ nahat zəro^a* “display the might of the arm” (Isaiah 30:30), and *nigləṭəḥ zəro^a* “of the arm, be revealed” (Isaiah 53:1). We have seen that one of these phrases, *ḥer ʾəḥ nahat zəro^a*, belongs to the contextual type of destruction or exertion of supernatural power and may be a sort of circumlocution for extending the hand. This does not necessarily apply to the other two phrases. Although both phrases describe actions performed by Yahweh (Isaiah 52:10; 53:1) or his prophet (Ezekiel 4:7), the contexts in which the phrases occur lack any explicit mention of supernatural or destructive effects. In the case of *ḥəšap zəro^a*, the fact that Ezekiel is commanded to prophesy while performing this gesture (Ezekiel 4:7) also seems to argue against the conclusion that this phrase denotes the gesture of

destruction or exertion of supernatural power. Many commentators do see the gestures in Isaiah 52:10 and Ezekiel 4:7 in a bellicose light.⁵⁴ However, this is not necessarily evident from the immediate context in these passages, and the arguments put forth by these commentators involve only tenuous comparisons with other, more distant passages.⁵⁵ Further, other interpretations of the gestures in these passages do exist,⁵⁶ and there remains the case of Isaiah 53:1, in which there is no indication that the baring of the arm has a warlike connotation.⁵⁷ Therefore, while it is possible to see the baring of the arm in these passages as a warlike gesture, perhaps even related

⁵⁴ On Isaiah 52:10: Whybray, *Isaiah 40-66*, 167-68; Young, *Book of Isaiah, Volume III*, 332; Muilenburg in *IB*, 5:612. On Ezekiel 4:7: Moshe Greenberg, *The Anchor Bible: Ezekiel 1-20* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1983), 106; Block, *Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 1-24*, 180; Kelvin G. Friebel, *Jeremiah's and Ezekiel's Sign-Acts* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 210-11.

⁵⁵ A few link the gesture in Isaiah 52:10 to Isaiah 51:9, in which an appeal is addressed to the arm of Yahweh to "awake" and "put on strength," and mythological deeds done by this arm are recounted; see Muilenburg in *IB*, 5:612; H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Isaiah*, 2:217; Goldingay, *Message of Isaiah 40-55*, 457. This passage undoubtedly alludes to past performances of the gesture of destruction or exertion of supernatural power. However, it does not necessarily follow that the gesture which the speaker hopes the arm of Yahweh will perform is that of destruction or exertion of supernatural power, and further, this passage is distant enough from Isaiah 52:10 that the thematic link between them is not entirely certain. John Goldingay and David Payne, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Isaiah 40-55* (London: T&T Clark International, 2006), 268, point out that the language of Isaiah 52:10 corresponds closely to Psalm 98:1-3; however, there is no unequivocal reference to large-scale destruction in the latter passage. For comparisons with other gesture phrases, see the sources cited in the previous note.

⁵⁶ On Isaiah 52:10: Goldingay, *Message of Isaiah 40-55*, 457: "The image is of Yhwh the worker rather than necessarily Yhwh the warrior." On Ezekiel 4:7: Keith W. Carley, *The Book of the Prophet Ezekiel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 32: "Like the turning of the prophet's face (verse 3), the 'bared arm' is a sign of God's activity (Isa. 52:10)"; John W. Wevers, *New Century Bible Commentary: Ezekiel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 56: "For *arm bared* cf. Isa. 52.10, where Yahweh is prepared to save. It symbolizes constant readiness, in this passage for the prophetic act." Particularly noteworthy is the interpretation of Brownlee, who suggests that Ezekiel 4:7 was originally placed in the middle of verse 3 and was moved to its present location purposefully by a later editor. In its original location in verse 3, the baring of the arm was supposed to be hostile (Brownlee compares Isaiah 52:10 and 51:9-10). When moved to its present location, however, the gesture took on a different meaning: "Ezekiel's directing of his face there and his laying bare of his arm now represent intercession. No longer, at this point, does the prophet 'prophesy against her.' Rather, he 'intercedes for her'" (here Brownlee compares, *inter alia*, 1 Kings 8:37-39, where "spreading the palms" toward the temple in Jerusalem is a way of supplicating Yahweh to deliver one from various afflictions, including a siege). See William H. Brownlee, *Word Biblical Commentary, Volume 28: Ezekiel 1-19* (Waco: Word Books, 1986), 62, 65, 69. This shows dissatisfaction with the warlike interpretation of the baring of the arm in the context of Ezekiel 4:7, though Brownlee's solution involves several interpretive leaps (not least of which is the fact that "spreading the palms" and "baring the arm" are hardly the same).

⁵⁷ F. J. Helfmeyer, "zaro", in *TDOT*, 4:135-36: "Isa. 52:10 and Ezk. 4:7 speak of Yahweh's bared arm; the expression is generally presumed to refer to Yahweh's intervention as a warrior. But Isa. 53:1 should caution against this interpretation, since here the bared arm of Yahweh...does not refer to a warlike or (legally) punitive action on the part of Yahweh. It is rather in the entire work and fate of the Servant that there was revealed the arm of Yahweh...What God does, here (Isa. 53:1) ascribed metaphorically to his 'arm,' is not exclusively warlike."

to the gesture of destruction or exertion of supernatural power, there is no evidence from context to support this.

It is also an open question whether these two phrases form a unified contextual type. There are some similarities between the contexts in which the phrases occur, but the similarities are not plentiful enough or consistent enough to establish a single contextual type with certainty. In Isaiah 52:10, the parallelism is chiasmic, and the gesture phrase is parallel to *yāšūʿ at ʾloheʿnuʿ* “the salvation of our God.” In nearby Isaiah 53:1, the action is parallel to “believing our report” (*heʿmiʿn lišmu ʿotenuʿ*). In both Isaiah 53:1 and Ezekiel 4:7, the gesture seems to accompany speech (at least, in the case of Isaiah 53:1, both visual and auditory communication are mentioned and are parallel). One possible interpretation of the evidence is that the phrases in Isaiah 53:1 and Ezekiel 4:7 belong to the same contextual type and describe a gesture of announcing a prophetic oracle, while the phrase in Isaiah 52:10 belongs to a different contextual type, perhaps that of raising the hand to summon (section 3.2.3.2) or that of making an oath or covenant (section 3.2.2).⁵⁸

3.3. Gestures of Raising or Extending Two Hands

3.3.1. The Two-Handed Oath Gesture

Two ancient Northwest Semitic texts refer to a hand gesture accompanying an oath and involving the raising of both hands. The two phrases used to describe this gesture are *heriʿm yomiʿn uʿšāmo ʿl* “raise the right hand and the left hand” (Hebrew, Daniel 12:7) and *nšʿ ydyn lT*

⁵⁸ Both of the latter two interpretations, that of summoning and that of covenant-making, would fit with the themes of this part of Second Isaiah. Also at issue in Isaiah 52:10 is the question of whether the adverbial phrase *lā ʿeʿneʿ kol-haggoʿyim* “in the sight of all the nations” is taken to mean that the nations are the Target of the gesture or whether the city of Zion, to which Yahweh is returning, is understood to be the Target.

“lift up the hands to T” (Aramaic, Panammu I, *KAI* 214:29-30). Although this gesture is far more poorly attested than the one-handed oath gesture discussed above, there is no compelling reason to doubt the existence of the two-handed oath gesture in Northwest Semitic practice. The two relevant texts were discussed in chapter 2, where arguments against the relevance of the phrase in Daniel were shown to be unconvincing.

These two phrases are as different in terms of context as they are in terms of linguistic and geographical setting. Daniel 12:7 narrates the actions and words of an angel as he pronounces an apocalyptic prophecy; the context of the gesture phrase in Panammu I is more difficult to understand due to the broken state of the inscription, but it apparently describes words to be spoken by a person accused of shedding royal blood. The adverbials following the two basic gesture phrases are somewhat different, though they can both be interpreted as indicating an upward, divine Target of the gesture: *ʿel-haššōmayim* “to heaven” (Daniel 12:7) and *lʾlh ʾbh* “to the god of his father” (*KAI* 214:29).

Notwithstanding these contextual differences, there is one critical contextual element that is shared in both passages, namely that the gesture accompanies an oath utterance. That the speech in both instances is best characterized as an oath (rather than as a prayer or other kind of speech act) is indicated by the use of oath formulae and by the general content of the speech (see the discussion under these phrases in chapter 2). This similarity in context is enough to establish a basic synonymy between the two gesture phrases. Both describe the raising (*heriʾm* “raise” = *nšʾ* “lift up”) of both hands (*yōmīʾn uʾšāmo ʾl* “the right hand and the left hand” = *ydyn* “the hands,” dual) while pronouncing an oath. It may be noted that phrases denoting the raising of one hand while making an oath showed similar variation among contextual elements: the descriptive setting, the specific event described, and the Agent varied, while the clear association with an

oath utterance remained constant. With both sets of gesture phrases, also, the adverbials following the basic gesture phrase vary but are still analogous; in both sets of phrases, for example, the preposition preceding the Target/Addressee of the gesture is either *ʿel-* or *lā*.

Since there are only two examples of phrases denoting the raising of both hands in an oath context, statements regarding the distribution of these phrases would be unwarranted, except to point out the obvious fact that the distribution is linguistically and geographically broad.

3.3.2. The Prayer Gesture of Raising Both Hands: *nāśōʿ yōdayim (+adv)_{prayer}* “Lift Up the Hands (+adv)_{prayer}”

Several phrases are used to describe the raising or spreading of both hands in the context of prayer or supplication. The most widely attested phrase in this context occurs in two main variations: *nāśōʿ yōdayim (adv)T_{dir}* “lift up the hands (to) T_{dir}” (Kirta, *KTU* 1.14 ii 22-23, iv 5; Rites for the Vintage, *KTU* 1.41 55; Psalm 134:2), *nāśōʿ yōdayim ʿel-T* “lift up the hands to T” (Zakkur, *KAI* 202 A:11; Psalm 28:2). There is also one occurrence in which the Target is introduced by the preposition *ʿal* (pAmherst 63 ix 17-19). To avoid clutter, the variants of this phrase in the contextual type of prayer or supplication will be referred to together as *nāśōʿ yōdayim (+adv)_{prayer}*.

The attestations of this phrase have several general contextual points in common, though there is a great deal of minor variation:

1. The descriptive setting involves an individual or group offering prayer to a deity. Beyond this, specifics of the descriptive setting vary; the gesture may be part of a long ritual prescription (*KTU* 1.41 55), an autobiographical account of great deeds (*KAI* 202 A:9-12), a psalmodic call to praise (Psalm 134:2), etc.
2. Words or phrases structurally aligned with the gesture phrase describe other forms of addressing the deity, either vocally or through physical actions. For example, the gesture phrase is parallel to *dbh lT* “sacrifice to T” in *KTU* 1.14 ii

22-23, iv 5) and to *šiwwa* ' *'el-T* “cry to T” in Psalm 28:2, and it is conjoined with *berak T* “bless T” in Psalm 134:2.

3. There is no single mythological or historical event referred to in more than one instance, but all have in common the fact that a prayer is offered.
4. A result clause describes an actual or expected response from the deity: answering (*KAI 202 A:11*), speaking (*KAI 202 A:11-12*), or “hearing” (Psalm 28:2; the use of “hear” in this context implies that the deity decides to grant the suppliant’s request). In *KTU 1.14*, Kirta’s gesture and sacrifice have as a result the “bringing down” (*šrd*, *KTU 1.14 ii 24, iv 6*) of a deity;⁵⁹ cf. earlier in the tablet, where the god 'Ilu “descends” (*yrd*, *KTU 1.14 i 36*) and then “answers” Kirta (*w[y'n] tr 'abh 'il* “the Bull, his father 'Ilu, answered,” *KTU 1.14 ii 6*).
5. Each of the examples belonging to this contextual type contains a reference to a prayer being addressed to a deity or implies that a prayer takes place, although none of the examples provide a quotation of the words spoken in the prayer. The prayer is referred to by means of a speech act verb (“cry,” “bless”) or is implied by the result that the deity “hears” or “answers.”
6. There is no purpose clause associated with the gesture phrase in these examples.
7. Adverbial constituents following the basic gesture phrase consistently indicate a deity to whom prayer is offered or the location of the deity’s abode. The adverbial may be introduced by a preposition (*'el-* “to” in two instances, *'al* “toward” in one instance), may occur as an unmarked adverbial (three instances), or may be marked by the adverbial morpheme *-h* (one instance).
8. In each example, the Agent of the gesture phrase is a human or group of humans.

As discussed in chapter 2, the precise nature of the prayer offered does not seem to be a defining feature of the contextual type. The prayer may be part of a regular ritual or a spontaneous plea in time of need, and it may involve blessing or supplication. In all of the examples mentioned so far, the addressee of the prayer is a deity.

Phrases which we take to be synonymous with *nššw' yodayim (+adv)_{prayer}* include *nššw' kappayim* “lift up the palms,” *pōraś kappayim (adv)T_{dir} 'el-/ləT_{add}* “spread the palms toward T_{dir} to T_{add},” *peraś kappayim* “spread out the palms,” *peraś yodayim 'el-T* “spread out the hands toward T,” *šittah kappayim* “spread forth the palms,” *heri's yodayim* “stretch out the hands with quick movement(s),” and *mo 'al yodayim* “putting up of the hands.” Several German scholars

⁵⁹ The meaning of the Ugaritic verb *šrd* has been the subject of two different proposals. We assume it to be the causative stem of the root *yrd* “descend” rather than a cognate of Hebrew *šrt* “serve.” Cf. *DULAT* 2:843.

writing prior to the mid-1980s cited these idioms together in the context of Israelite prayer without any indication of perceived differences between them.⁶⁰ However, in none of these studies is the synonymy of these idioms explicitly argued. The paucity of recent studies that acknowledge a connection between these phrases⁶¹ is perhaps due to the influence of Mayer Gruber, who argues that the idioms *נָסַו' יָדַיִם* and *פָּרָאס/פֶּרָאס קַפַּיִם* describe separate gestures (see below). We will attempt to show from context how these various idioms function synonymously, discussing each phrase in turn.

3.3.2.1. *נָסַו' קַפַּיִם* “Lift Up the Palms”

One gesture phrase that may be considered synonymous with *נָסַו' יָדַיִם (+adv)_{prayer}* is *נָסַו' קַפַּיִם* “lift up the palms,” which has four attestations, all found in the Hebrew Bible (Psalms 63:5; 119:48; Lamentations 2:19; 3:41). We may also include here the noun phrase *מָאֵס' אֶת קַפַּיִם* “lifting up of the palms” (Psalm 141:2). Each of these five passages describes an individual offering prayer to a deity. Phrases that are parallel to the gesture phrase in these passages denote various actions by which one addresses deity, as shown in the following table:

⁶⁰ Heinrich Vorwahl, *Die Gebärdensprache im Alten Testament* (Berlin: Emil Ebering, 1932), 47, cites passages containing *נָסַו' יָדַיִם*, *נָסַו' קַפַּיִם*, *מו' אֶל יָדַיִם*, *פָּרָאס/פֶּרָאס קַפַּיִם*, and other idioms. Thomas Ohm, *Die Gebetsgebärden der Völker und das Christentum* (Leiden: Brill, 1948), 256, cites passages containing *פָּרָאס קַפַּיִם* and *נָסַו' יָדַיִם*. Othmar Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World: Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Book of Psalms* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1997 [German edition 1972]), 321-22, implicitly connects *נָסַו' יָדַיִם*, *שִׁיטָּח קַפַּיִם*, *פֶּרָאס יָדַיִם 'עַל-T*, and *פָּרָאס קַפַּיִם*. Ackroyd in *TDOT*, 5:416, uses similar language in his description of *נָסַו' יָדַיִם/קַפַּיִם* and *פָּרָאס/פֶּרָאס קַפַּיִם*.

⁶¹ One such recent study is that of John A. Tvedtnes, “Temple Prayer in Ancient Times,” in *The Temple in Time and Eternity*, ed. Donald W. Parry and Stephen D. Ricks (Provo: The Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1999), 81-83 (cites passages containing *פָּרָאס קַפַּיִם*, *נָסַו' יָדַיִם*, and *מו' אֶל יָדַיִם*). Again, the connection between these phrases is not explicitly argued, only apparently assumed.

Table 10. Phrases Parallel to *nōśō' kappayim* and *maś'at kappayim*

Reference for <i>nōśō' kappayim</i>	Semantic parallel in parallel colon	Semantic parallels in surrounding bicola
Psalms 63:5	<i>berak T</i> “bless T”	<i>šihar T</i> “seek T diligently” (v 1) <i>šibbəhu^w šəpəṭayim T</i> “of the lips, praise T” (v 3) <i>hillel pē^h</i> “of the mouth, praise” (v 5) <i>həgə^h bəT</i> “meditate on T” (v 6) <i>rinnen</i> “sing joyfully” (v 7)
Psalms 119:48	<i>śəḥ bəT</i> “meditate on T”	<i>dibber bəT</i> “speak of T” (v 46) <i>hišta ša' bəT</i> “take delight in T” (v 47)
Psalms 141:2	<i>təpillə^h</i> “prayer”	<i>qərə' (lə)T</i> “call (upon) T” (v 1) <i>ʿəyənayim ʿel-T</i> “of the eyes, be toward T” (v 8) <i>ḥəśə^h bəT</i> “seek refuge in T” (v 8)
Lamentations 2:19	(none)	<i>qəm rənan</i> “rise and cry out (in distress)” ⁶² (v 19) <i>šəpak leb nokəḥ pəne^y T</i> “pour out the heart before T” (v 19)
Lamentations 3:41	(none)	<i>šəb ʿad-T</i> “return to T” (v 40)

The specific actions include both vocal and bodily forms of addressing the deity, and the motives range from praise to desperate entreaty, but the main idea of addressing the deity is constant.

Three of the five examples of *nōśō' kappayim* and *maś'at kappayim* occur in the Psalms. In these passages, the Psalmist, addressing God, refers to the lifting up of his (the Psalmist's) palms. At least in the case of Psalm 141:2, it is apparent that the lifting of the palms and the direct speech of the prayer are simultaneous. In the other passages, the parallelism with verbs like *rənan* “cry out” and *berak* “bless” makes it clear that the lifting up of the hands accompanies a prayer. In each of these passages, also, a response by the deity is either explicitly or implicitly envisaged as a result of the gesture and its accompanying prayer. In Psalm 141:1-2, the Psalmist explicitly asks that God “come quickly” and “give ear to my voice.” In the two passages from

⁶² The sense of distress in the verb *rənan* here is required by the context; cf. BDB, 943.

Lamentations, the Agent of the gesture is said to be in a situation of distress or affliction, so an expected response of aid or forgiveness from the deity is implicit.⁶³

Three of the examples of this phrase (Psalm 119:48; Lamentations 2:19; 3:41) have a Target constituent introduced by the preposition *'el-* “to.” This is similar to some examples of *נָסַוּ יָדָיִם (+adv)_{prayer}* and is consistent with the function of describing a prayer being addressed “to” the deity. As with *נָסַוּ יָדָיִם (+adv)_{prayer}*, the Agent of the gesture is consistently a human being.

The verb in this phrase is the same as in the phrase *נָסַוּ יָדָיִם (+adv)_{prayer}*. The main difference between the two phrases, from a lexical standpoint, is the Sender: *יָדָיִם* “hands, forearms” vs. *kappayim* “palms, hands.”⁶⁴ Given the semantic overlap between these words for the Sender, the variation between them raises an important question: Does *נָסַוּ יָדָיִם* specifically refer to the upward direction of the palms, or is it just another way of describing the lifting up of the hands without any specific orientation of the palms? If the former is the case, then this would pose a potential challenge to the synonymy of this phrase with *נָסַוּ יָדָיִם (+adv)_{prayer}*.

For the most part, there exists a long-standing consensus among translators of the passages in question to translate *kappayim* as “hands” and not “palms.”⁶⁵ The same is true for other idioms using *kappayim* that are discussed here, such as *p̄raś kappayim* “spread the palms,” which most translate as “spread the hands” or “stretch out the hands” (see section 3.3.2.2

⁶³ Specific indicators of distress or affliction include the following: “for the life of your children, who faint with hunger at the ends of all the streets” (Lamentations 2:19); “you have covered yourself with anger and have pursued us, you have slain and have not pitied” (and so on for ten more verses, Lamentations 3:43-54).

⁶⁴ On the overlapping meanings of these words, see Ackroyd in *TDOT*, 5:400, 403-5; *HALOT* 2:386-87, 491-92.

⁶⁵ For the four passages discussed in this section (Psalms 63:5; 119:48; Lamentations 2:19; 3:41), KJV, NIV, RSV, NRSV, and NJB uniformly render *kappayim* as “hands,” with the exception of the (N)RSV rendering of Psalm 119:48, in which the whole idiom is paraphrased as “revere.” The German translations that we have surveyed uniformly have *Hände*, and Romance language translations uniformly have the appropriate derivative of Latin *manus* “hands.” The Latin Vulgate itself renders the idiom in each of these passages as *manus*.

below).⁶⁶ However, Mayer Gruber, in his study on nonverbal communication, which includes some of the gestures discussed here, consistently renders the words *yodayim* and *kappayim* as “hands” and “palms” respectively.⁶⁷ He does not explain his reasons for this literal translation, but it may be to show a clear distinction between idioms using the two words.

In general, where *kappayim* is used with verbs of lifting or raising in phrases describing a prayer gesture, we take it to have the sense of “hands,” just like *yodayim*. The main reason for this is the paradigmatic similarity between idioms with *yodayim* and *kappayim*. The verb *נָסָו* “lift up,” for example, occurs in phrases with both *yodayim* and *kappayim*, both phrases occurring in a homogenous contextual type of prayer. Likewise, the verb *פֶּרָאָה* “spread out” occurs in phrases with both *yodayim* and *kappayim*, again in the same contextual type of prayer. If the use of *kappayim* instead of *yodayim* in these phrases were significant, one would tend to expect a contextual difference to appear between gesture phrases with *kappayim* on the one hand and those with *yodayim* on the other, but no such difference is evident. With each pair of phrases, the context seems to be basically the same, or to include the same range of variation in contextual elements. We therefore understand *kappayim* in these phrases to have the sense of “hands,” although we uniformly translate the word as “palms” in order to mark the lexical distinction between *yodayim* and *kappayim* in these phrases. As discussed in section 3.1 above, it is impossible to entirely remove the ambiguity in gesture phrases using words with multiple meanings like *kap*, so the stance that we have just outlined is more of a working assumption than a conclusive statement.

⁶⁶ Exceptionally, in Exodus 9:29, the Latin Vulgate renders *kappayim* literally as *palmas* “palms.” Four verses later, where the same idiom is repeated, the translation reverts to *manus* “hands.”

⁶⁷ Gruber, *Aspects of Nonverbal Communication*, v, 23, etc.

3.3.2.2. *p̄ras kappayim (adv)T_{dir} 'el-/ləT_{add}* “Spread the Palms toward T_{dir} to T_{add}”

Another synonymous phrase is *p̄ras kappayim (adv)T_{dir} 'el-/ləT_{add}* “spread the palms toward T_{dir} to T_{add},” of which there are eleven attestations, all from the Hebrew Bible (Exodus 9:29, 33; 1 Kings 8:22, 38, 54; Psalm 44:21-22; Job 11:13-15; Ezra 9:5; 2 Chronicles 6:12-13 (2x), 29-30). This phrase is more commonly attested than *nōśō' yōdayim (+adv)_{prayer}* within Biblical Hebrew, though the two phrases are about evenly matched in frequency in the overall corpus of Northwest Semitic literature, and the latter is certainly more widely distributed.

The descriptive settings in which *p̄ras kappayim (adv)T_{dir} 'el-/ləT_{add}* occurs include a variety of textual genres (narrative, Psalms, prayer language), but they always involve an individual or group offering prayer to a deity. Words structurally aligned with the gesture phrase describe various vocal and bodily ways of addressing deity: (1) the spreading of the palms is explicitly associated with *təpillō^h* “prayer” and *təhinnō^h* “supplication” in 1 Kings 8:38 (= 2 Chronicles 6:29), 54; (2) in Job 11:13, the gesture phrase is conjoined with *hekiⁿ leb* “direct the heart”; (3) in Ezra 9:5-6, the spreading of the palms is treated as concurrent with *heri^m pōni^m* “raise the face.” Clauses following the gesture phrase describe responses from the deity. Specifically, in Exodus 9:29, 33, noises and hail cease as a response to Moses’ spreading of his palms to Yahweh; and in 1 Kings 8:38-39 (= 2 Chronicles 6:29-30), a series of verbs describes responses from the deity to prayer with spread palms: *šōma* “hear,” *sōlah* “forgive,” *ōśō^h* “act,” and *nōtan* “give.” The fact that vocal prayer is offered in conjunction with the spreading of the palms is consistently apparent in the context. In the cases of Solomon’s prayer (1 Kings 8; 2 Chronicles 6) and Ezra’s prayer (Ezra 9), the actual words of the prayer are quoted. In 1 Kings 8:38 (= 2 Chronicles 6:29), the verbs “pray” and “supplicate” make it clear that vocal prayer accompanies the gesture.

The options for adverbial constituents appear to match precisely those of *nāśōʿ yōdayim* (+*adv*)_{prayer}: a prepositional phrase introduced by *ʿel-* (Exodus 9:29, 33; 1 Kings 8:38; Job 11:13; Ezra 9:5; 2 Chronicles 6:29), a prepositional phrase introduced by *lā* (Psalm 44:21), an unmarked adverbial (1 Kings 8:22, 54), or a word with the adverbial morpheme *-ōʰ* (2 Chronicles 6:13). The adverbial constituent always refers to the deity or his abode. Finally, the Agent of the gesture phrase is always a human or group of humans.

The verbs *nāśōʿ* “lift up” and *pōraś* “spread” can take on similar meanings when their direct object is “hands” (*yōdayim* or a semantic equivalent) and the context is that of prayer. This is particularly true when the full gesture phrase includes an adverbial constituent that indicates the Target of the gesture, for example *bānōś ʿiʿ yōday ʿel-dābīʿr qōdšēkō* “when I lift up my hands to the cella of your sanctuary” (Psalm 28:2) or *wā ʿepōraśōʰ kappay ʿel-YHWH ʿelohōy* “I spread my palms to Yahweh my God” (Ezra 9:5). In the case of *pōraś*, the adverbial constituent implies that the action is not limited to a simple spreading of the hands (one that might take place, for example, in the fold of one’s robe or behind one’s back) but rather carries the connotation of a presentation or display of the hands.⁶⁸ Thus both verbs, when used in the context of prayer, describe a positioning or movement of the hands in relation to a specific Target.

As with the phrase *nāśōʿ kappayim* “lift up the palms,” we take *kappayim* in the phrase *pōraś kappayim (adv)T_{dir} ʿel-/lāT_{add}* to have the sense of “hands,” which sense is shared by the word *yōdayim*. For discussion of this, see section 3.3.2.1 above.

One might ask whether the “spreading” of the hands refers to an opening of the palm of each hand or a spreading of the hands away from each other (and/or away from the trunk of the

⁶⁸ Cf. BDB, 831, sub *pōraś*, at the end of definition 1: “*spread out* = display.” The citation given is Proverbs 13:16, *uʿkāsēʿl yiprōś ʿiwwelet* “a fool displays folly.”

body).⁶⁹ The occurrence of the idioms *p̄raś kap* “spread the palm” (Proverbs 31:20) and *p̄raś yōd* “spread the hand” (Lamentations 1:10), with a singular rather than a plural Sender, argues for the former interpretation.⁷⁰ The verb *p̄raś*, then, would seem to indicate specifically a display of the open hands, whereas *nōśōʿ* can refer to the lifting up of either open or closed hands.

Mayer Gruber, in his book *Aspects of Nonverbal Communication in the Ancient Near East*, asserts that the expressions *p̄raś kappayim* and *nōśōʿ yōdayim*, when used in the context of prayer, describe two different gestures. In addition to his study of the context in the passages where these expressions occur, Gruber refers to the medieval Jewish commentator Elijah Bashyazi and to the Latin Vulgate to support his view. He writes,

The Vulgate thus indicates that *prś k̄pym* and *nśʿ ydym* refer to different gestures. This is to say that *prś k̄pym* ‘supplicate’ is derived from a gesture of pleading that one’s empty hands be filled while *nśʿ ydym* goes back to a salute acknowledging the deity’s lofty abode...It appears, therefore, that just as *prś k̄pym* is generally a gesture of supplication, only occasionally meaning worship as in Ps. 44:21 and Job. 11:31, so is *nśʿ ydym* (= Ugar. *nšʿ ydm*) generally a gesture of praise and occasionally a gesture of supplication as in Ps. 28:2. Because the essential meaning of *nśʿ ydym* is to point to the deity’s abode it is always followed by a phrase defining that abode.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Some of the more recent Bible translations (RSV, NJB) and dictionary entries (*HALOT*, 3:976; *DCH*, 6:785) translate *p̄raś kappayim* in these passages as “stretch out the hands,” which seems to imply that the hands are positioned away from the trunk of the body. The same notion is found already in KJV, which qualifies the verb “spread” with the adverbs “abroad” and “forth” (“I will spread abroad my hands,” Exodus 9:29; “and spread forth his hands,” 1 Kings 8:22). BDB (831) and NIV use the translation “spread (out) the hands,” which is more ambiguous in this respect. This last translation is preferred here, not only because it reflects the ambiguity inherent the Hebrew idiom, but also because it allows for what appears to us to be the more likely interpretation of the idiom (as explained in the present paragraph).

⁷⁰ Both of these idioms with a singular Sender also have a Target indicated by a prepositional phrase. These idioms occur in non-ritual contexts and are therefore only marginally relevant to the present study.

⁷¹ Gruber, *Aspects of Nonverbal Communication*, 35-37. Cf. Keel, *Symbolism of the Biblical World*, 312-13, 322. Keel deals with the symbolism of outstretched hand gestures from an iconographic perspective, touching on many of the same issues that Gruber raises but coming to different, though analogous, conclusions. The idea that the gesture of “spreading the palms” symbolizes the receiving of something in the hands resurfaces in a number of publications; as just one example, James M. Efrid, in his entry “Gestures” in Bruce M. Metzger and Michael D. Coogan, *The Oxford Companion to the Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 252-53, writes that the gesture is “obviously holding out the hands to receive what was requested.” The present discussion should suffice to demonstrate that, in fact, the significance of the gesture phrase is far from obvious.

We disagree with this distinction between *p̄ras kappayim* and *n̄św' yodayim* for two main reasons. First, the ancient textual sources do not provide an adequate basis for distinguishing these phrases in terms of function, adverbial constituents, or the Target of gesture and speech. The notions of supplication and worship are present in examples of both expressions, and it is impossible to say which notion is predominant for either phrase on the basis of the textual corpus alone. As Gruber recognizes, Psalm 28:2 is definitely an example of *n̄św' yodayim* in the context of supplication; this already considerably weakens his classification of the two expressions, since he cites only three examples of *n̄św' yodayim* (including the one example from the Ugaritic Kirta epic, which may also be said to involve supplication).⁷² Two other Northwest Semitic texts containing this phrase, which are not included in Gruber's study, also clearly link the phrase with a prayer of supplication. In the Zakkur inscription (KAI 202 A:9-12), king Zakkur recounts having "lifted up his hands" to his deity in a prayer for deliverance against enemies who were besieging his city. In the Aramaic text in Demotic script (pAmherst 63 ix 17-19), a deity is said to send good tidings to a widow who "lifts up her hands" to him. As we have seen, adverbial constituents referring to the deity's abode are just as frequent with *p̄ras kappayim* as with *n̄św' yodayim*. As for the Target of gesture and speech, all of the examples of *p̄ras kappayim* and *peras kappayim* are in the context of prayer to a deity; the only possible exception to this is Jeremiah 4:31, and here the interpretation as a prayer to God is at least plausible.

Second, iconographic evidence from the ancient Near East does not support making a distinction between a supplicatory gesture of "pleading that one's empty hands be filled" and a prayer gesture saluting the deity's abode. Gruber's distinction presupposes that the actual gesture denoted by *p̄ras kappayim* can be reconstructed in such a way that the symbolism of filling the

⁷² Gruber, *Aspects of Nonverbal Communication*, 36-38.

hands would apply—that is, with the palms at least roughly horizontal and facing upward. However, this reconstruction is not easily compatible with the iconographic evidence. To be sure, an Assyrian relief from Nineveh (now in the British Museum) shows a pair of Judean captives kneeling before king Sennacherib with their hands in this kind of position, and Keel describes these figures as “supplication personified.”⁷³ Nevertheless, neither the interpretation of the gesture shown in this relief as one of supplication nor the link between this gesture and the Hebrew expression “spread the palms” is necessarily evident. Fear, shame, and mourning would also be appropriate for the pair of Judean captives in this context; the accompanying inscription says simply, “Sennacherib, king of the universe, king of Assyria, seated upon a sedan chair, the spoils of Lachish passed before him.”⁷⁴ By contrast, in Egyptian scenes that certainly (based on context and accompanying captions) depict West Semitic people making supplication, the spread palms face outward toward the one being addressed.⁷⁵ Further, this gesture is identical to the one used for praise, and often the functions of praise and supplication are both explicitly mentioned in reference to this one gesture. In an Egyptian scene of West Semites bringing tribute, for example, the tribute-bearers perform the uplifted hand gesture with the palms outward, and they are described in the accompanying label as “adoring” and “honoring” the Pharaoh and as begging for “the breath of life.”⁷⁶ The contribution of Near Eastern iconography to the reconstruction and interpretation of hand gestures will be explored more thoroughly in chapter 4.

⁷³ ANEP, no. 371; Keel, *Symbolism of the Biblical World*, 321 and pl. 24.

⁷⁴ COS, 2:304.

⁷⁵ ANEP, nos. 5, 344-46.

⁷⁶ ANEP, no. 45.

3.3.2.3. *perás kappayim* “Spread Out the Palms”

A third synonymous phrase is *perás kappayim* “spread out the palms” (Isaiah 1:15; Jeremiah 4:31). The two passages in which this phrase occurs are similar in terms of descriptive setting, both being statements by Yahweh set within prophecies. Both passages describe people who have sinned but then seek desperately for divine aid in their time of trouble. These suppliants spread out their hands in prayer to God but nevertheless suffer the consequences of their misdeeds. In Isaiah 1:15, the gesture phrase is parallel to the noun *təpillō^h* “prayer”; this provides a contextual link with the phrase *mas’at kappayim* “lifting up of the palms,” which is parallel to *təpillō^h* in Psalm 141:2.

In Isaiah 1:15, the results of spreading the palms and of the accompanying prayer are negative due to the unrighteous state of those offering prayer: *’a li’yim ’e’y nay mikkem... ’e’y nenni’y šome^a ’ yəde’y kem dmi’y m mōle ’u^w* “I will hide my eyes from you...I am not listening. Your hands are full of blood!” The hoped-for results of spreading the palms are the opposites of “hiding the eyes” and “not listening.” The opposite of “not listening” is obviously “listening” or “hearing” (*šōma*), and Proverbs 28:27 indicates that the opposite of “hiding the eyes” (*he li’yim ’e’y nayim*) could be “giving” (*nōtan*):⁷⁷

Proverbs 28:27 no^wten lōrōš ’e’y n maḥso^wr u^wma li’yim ’e’y nō^yw rab-mə’ero^wt
There is no lack for him who gives to the poor, but for him who hides his eyes is an abundance of curses.

In Jeremiah 4:31, God is said to “have heard” (*šōma ti’y*) the voice of the woman who spreads her palms in supplication. However, it is evident from the context (a prophecy of doom) that the sense of “hear” is not that of responding favorably to the prayer but simply that of being aware.

⁷⁷ Cf. 2 Kings 4:27, in which God’s “hiding” (*he li’yim*) information from a prophet is contrasted with “telling” (*higgīd*).

The hoped-for result of the prayer is, however, not difficult to deduce from the context. The female personification of the daughter of Zion prays, “Woe is me, for my soul is thirsty because of murderers!” The implication is that she hopes for deliverance from danger and liquid to quench her thirst. Thus these two examples of *perás kappayim* are basically consistent with passages in which other prayer gesture phrases occur alongside a description of an actual or expected response from the deity.

No adverbials follow the basic gesture phrase in these passages, although both passages allow the assumption that the implied Target of the gesture is the deity Yahweh. (This is less certainly the case in Jeremiah 4:31; for discussion, see under *perás kappayim* in chapter 2.) In both passages, the Agent is human: the nation of Israel (referred to with masculine plural pronouns in Isaiah 1) and the female personification of the daughter of Zion (referred to with feminine singular pronouns in Jeremiah 4).

The only lexical difference between the phrases *pəras kappayim* and *perás kappayim* is the stem of the verb, which is Qal in the first phrase and Piel in the second. There might be some difference in nuance corresponding to the difference in verbal stem; for instance, the use of the Piel could indicate a more “intensive” spreading of the hands, one involving more movement or more rapidity than that denoted by the Qal stem, which would reflect the utter need and urgency evident in such passages as Jeremiah 4:31.⁷⁸ Essentially, however, there is no problem viewing

⁷⁸ The traditional understanding of the Piel as expressing the intensive of the Qal is exemplified in this quote from GKC §52f: “The fundamental idea of *Pi`ēl*, to which all the various shades of meaning in this conjugation may be referred, is *to busy oneself eagerly* with the action indicated by the stem. This intensifying of the idea of the stem, which is outwardly expressed by the strengthening of the second radical, appears in individual cases as—(a) a *strengthening* and *repetition* of the action...” This traditional understanding of the main function of the stem has not gone unchallenged; more recent studies have argued that the basic function is factitive (i.e. governing a direct object and expressing the effecting of the object’s state). Waltke and O’Connor, in *IBHS*, 396-417, give a presentation of the functions of this stem that entirely excludes the intensive (see there for references to previous studies). However, some grammarians continue to invoke the idea of intensivity to explain the function of this stem. For example, Joshua Blau, *Phonology and Morphology of Biblical Hebrew: An Introduction* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2010), 229, writes, “It appears that originally the *pi`el*...was partly iconic (onomatopoetic), since the redoubling of the

the idioms *pəraś kappayim* and *peras kappayim* as being synonymous. The two verbal stems share “the same general sense” and are given virtually the same meanings in the standard dictionaries.⁷⁹

3.3.2.4. *peras yodayim* ’el-T “Spread Out the Hands toward T”

The fourth phrase that may be considered synonymous with *nəśə’ yodayim* (+adv)_{prayer} is *peras yodayim* ’el-T “spread out the hands toward T.” One instance of this phrase is in Psalm 143:6, in which the Psalmist prays to Yahweh (verse 1), pleading desperately for deliverance from an enemy who has pursued him and “crushed his life to the ground” (verse 3). In his prayer, the Psalmist refers to his simultaneous spreading out of the hands: *peras̄tiʹ yoday* ’el^ykə “I spread out my hands to you.” In the following colon, the Psalmist cites his thirst, similarly to Jeremiah 4:31:

Psalm 143:6	napšiʹ kəʹ ereṣ- ʹayepə ^h ləkə my soul is like a thirsty land for you
Jeremiah 4:31	ʹoʷy-nəʹ liʹ kiʹ- ʹəyəpə ^h napšiʹ ləhorəgiʹm woe is me, for my soul is thirsty because of murderers

The expected result of the gesture and prayer in Psalm 143:6 is revealed in the following verse, in which the Psalmist pleads that Yahweh will “quickly answer” him (*maher* ʹneniʹ) and “not

second radical expresses intensity, both qualitatively...and especially quantitatively...” As for the specific root *prś*, the intensive function may not be the only possibility that would explain the data, but it seems more satisfactory than the alternatives. For example, one alternative is suggested by Waltke and O’Connor in *IBHS*, 406-7, who argue that “the *Qal* [of *prś*] specifies the movement as an event (processual aspect/*Aktionsart*), and the *Piel* as at an end (terminal *Aktionsart*.” They thus translate *peras̄tiʹ yoday* in Isaiah 65:2 as “I hold my hands outstretched.” This understanding of the *Piel* of *prś* seems to us a stretch indeed, as it would require the swimmer in Isaiah 25:11 to “hold his hands outstretched to swim,” at best a less effective swimming technique!

⁷⁹ BDB, 831 (*Qal* “spread out,” *Piel* “spread out”); *HALOT*, 3:975-76 (*Qal* “stretch out the hands,” *Piel* “spread out the hands,” “people stretch out their hands in prayer”); *DCH*, 6:785-86 (*Qal* “stretch out...the hands,” *Piel* “stretch out or spread out the hands”).

hide [his] face” from the Psalmist (*’al-taster pəneʿkə mimmenniʿ*). Thus the context of the gesture phrase in Psalm 143:6 is similar to that of the other phrases discussed in this section, especially *peras kappayim*, in terms of descriptive setting, the content of speech accompanying the gesture, and the expected response of the addressee.

The Target following the gesture phrase in Psalm 143:6 is introduced by the preposition *’el-* and refers to the deity to whom prayer is offered. The Agent of the gesture phrase is a human who finds himself in dire need. All of these things accord with examples of *נָסָוּ יָדָיִם* (+*adv*)_{prayer}.

Further examples of *peras yadayim* are found in contexts that are not necessarily ritual. Two of these, in Isaiah 65:2 and Lamentations 1:17, are listed below in section 3.5.2. One example of this phrase occurs in a non-ritual context but may be employed purposely to allude to the ritual use of “spreading out the hands.” This example is found in Isaiah 25:10-11, whose interpretation is discussed in chapter 2. Since *peras yadayim ’el-T*, unlike *pəras kappayim* (*adv*)_{T_{dir} ’el-/ləT_{add}} and *peras kappayim*, is attested in both ritual and non-ritual contexts, including contexts in which the Target of the gesture is human (Isaiah 65:2; Lamentations 1:17), it is possible that Gruber’s assessment of this phrase as denoting “supplicate” is correct. However, it is also possible that *peras yadayim ’el-T* is not a unity but represents two or more homonymous gestures, a ritual prayer gesture and a non-ritual gesture of supplication. Unfortunately, the paucity of examples and the relative scarcity of attested contextual elements (including adverbials) make it impossible to be certain in this regard. Because of the close contextual similarities described above between *peras yadayim ’el-T* in Psalm 143:6 and *peras kappayim* in Isaiah 1:15 and Jeremiah 4:31, we prefer to consider the former to be synonymous

with the latter, even if it means excluding the other examples of *perás yodayim* from this contextual category.

The phrase *perás yodayim* does not present a challenge to synonymy with *nóśō' yodayim* (+*adv*)_{prayer} in terms of lexicon. Both the Piel stem of the root *prś* and the dual of *yōd* are used in other phrases that have already been discussed in this section.

3.3.2.5. *šittah kappayim* “Spread Forth the Palms”

A fifth phrase that may be considered synonymous with *nóśō' yodayim* (+*adv*)_{prayer} is *šittah kappayim* “spread forth the palms,” which occurs only in Psalm 88:10. The descriptive setting in this Psalm is that of a prayer addressed to Yahweh. The gesture phrase is here parallel to *qərō 'ti'kō* “I have called upon you” in the adjoining colon, and the phrases *šiwwa 'ti' 'elē'kō* “I cry to you” and *təpillōti' təqaddəmekkō* “my prayer comes before you” in verse 14 may also be considered semantically parallel (additional semantic parallels are found in verses 2 and 3). These parallel phrases indicate that the gesture was accompanied by speech in the form of a prayer.

The divine Target of the gesture phrase is introduced by the preposition *'el-*, similarly to other phrases discussed above in this section. The Agent in this passage is a human in dire need (verses 4-10a give a long list of terrible afflictions that have motivated the Psalmist to seek out Yahweh's help).

The verb *šōtah* is glossed by BDB as “spread, spread abroad” on the basis of four textual attestations and on the basis of cognates in Postbiblical Hebrew, Aramaic, Arabic, and Ethiopic.⁸⁰ The Piel stem of this verb has only the one attestation in Psalm 88:10, but corresponding D-stem forms with the meaning of “spread out” are found in Jewish Aramaic and

⁸⁰ BDB, 1008-9.

Arabic.⁸¹ Thus the verb is basically equivalent in meaning to *pəras* and *peras*, which are used in idioms whose synonymy with *nəśə' yodayim (+adv)_{prayer}* has been discussed above.

3.3.2.6. *heri's yodayim* “Stretch Out the Hands with Quick Movement(s)”

The phrase *heri's yodayim* “stretch out the hands with quick movement(s)” describes a gesture that people from Kush will perform, according to the Psalmist, as they come with gifts to offer submission to Yahweh (Psalm 68:32). Phrases in verses 30-33 that are in poetic parallelism with the gesture phrase indicate association with the offering of gifts and of praise to God. These actions are typologically similar to offering sacrifice and blessing God, actions that are associated with *nəśə' yodayim (+adv)_{prayer}* and other phrases belonging to the same contextual type.

The verb *heri's* is the Hiphil stem of the root *rwš*; the Qal-stem form of this root means “run.” Francis Brown, in BDB, glosses the Hiphil stem as a simple causative, “cause to run”; he extrapolates the sense “quickly stretch out hands...(viz. with offerings)” in Psalm 68:32.⁸² The idea that the hands are stretched out specifically with offerings is not necessary here. However, the connotation of quick movement follows naturally from the semantics of the root. This connotation accords with the use of *peras yodayim* in reference both to a prayer gesture and to a swimmer's strokes in Isaiah 25:11 (see section 2.2.22).

3.3.2.7. *mo'al yodayim* “Putting Up of the Hands”

The seventh and last phrase that bears a synonymous relationship to *nəśə' yodayim (+adv)_{prayer}* is attested as a noun phrase, *mo'al yodayim* “putting up of the hands” (Nehemiah 8:6).

⁸¹ For Jewish Aramaic *šattah*, see Jastrow, 1553; for Arabic *sattaha*, see Wehr, 477.

⁸² BDB, 930.

The descriptive setting of this phrase is a narrative of a prayer offered by a group of people, which prayer includes a series of ritual actions: the prayer leader, Ezra, “blesses Yahweh” (*wayborek... ’et-YHWH*), then the people “answer ‘Amen, Amen’ while putting up their hands” (*wayya ’anu... ’omen ’omen bamo ’al yade’hem*), “bow” (*wayyiqqadu*), and “prostrate to Yahweh with their face to the ground” (*wayyištaḥ^awu laYHWH ’appayim ’orsə^h*). The utterance of “Amen, Amen” accompanying the uplifted hand gesture is not at odds with the utterance of a prayer in other instances of lifting or spreading the hands; the liturgical response is a means by which the large group participates in Ezra’s prayer of blessing. The passage does not provide any evidence of parallel expressions or result clauses associated with this gesture phrase, nor are there any adverbials following the phrase.

The noun *mo ’al* is glossed as “lifting” or “raising” in the standard Hebrew lexicons.⁸³ The noun therefore shares the same basic sense as the verb *nəś’* “lift up” and the noun *mas’et* “lifting up.”⁸⁴ There is no significant challenge to understanding the phrase *mo ’al yədayim* as synonymous with other phrases describing the lifting of the hands in prayer.

3.3.2.8. Distribution of Synonymous Phrases in the Context of Prayer

Thus we have a total of eight synonymous phrases used to describe the lifting up or spreading out of both hands in prayer.

⁸³ BDB, 751 (“lifting”), *HALOT*, 2:613 (“exaltation, raising”), *DCH*, 5:404 (“raising”).

⁸⁴ BDB, 673, renders *mas’et* as “uplifting”; cf. *HALOT*, 2:640 (“elevation,” “raising my hands in prayer”).

Table 11. Frequency and Distribution of Synonymous Gesture Phrases in the Context of Prayer

Full gesture phrase	Attestations	Notes on distribution
<i>נָסַוּ יָדַיִם</i> (+adv) _{prayer} “lift up the hands (+adv) _{prayer} ”	7	Overall wide distribution in Northwest Semitic literature (Ugaritic, Hebrew, Aramaic); within Hebrew, limited to Psalms (28; 134)
<i>נָסַוּ קַפָּיִם</i> “lift up the palms”	5	Psalms, Lamentations
<i>פָּרָס קַפָּיִם</i> (adv) _{T_{dir}} ’el-/ləT _{add} “spread the palms toward T _{dir} to T _{add} ”	11	Only Hebrew Bible, but wide distribution of biblical periods and genres: JE (Exodus 9:29, 33), Deuteronomistic History (1 Kings 8), Psalms (Psalm 44), Job, Late Biblical Hebrew (Ezra, 2 Chronicles)
<i>פָּרָס קַפָּיִם</i> “spread out the palms”	2	First Isaiah, Jeremiah
<i>פָּרָס יָדַיִם</i> ’el-T “spread out the hands toward T”	2	First Isaiah (allusion to ritual gesture in Isaiah 25:10-11), Psalm 143
<i>שִׁיְתָהּ קַפָּיִם</i> “spread forth the palms”	1	Psalms 88
<i>הֵרִישׁ יָדַיִם</i> “stretch out the hands with quick movement(s)”	1	Psalms 68
<i>מוֹ’אל יָדַיִם</i> “putting up of the hands”	1	Nehemiah

Note: The eleven occurrences of *פָּרָס קַפָּיִם* (adv)_{T_{dir}} ’el-/ləT_{add} are found in only six biblical pericopes, two of which describe the same event (the dedication of Solomon’s temple). Thus the number of distinct occurrences is about equal to *נָסַוּ קַפָּיִם*.

The only one of these expressions for which there is any Northwest Semitic evidence outside of Biblical Hebrew is the first one, *נָסַוּ יָדַיִם* (+adv)_{prayer}. We may conjecture that the frequent use of idioms describing the “spreading” (*prś*) of the hands in prayer is a development within Hebrew.⁸⁵ It is remarkable that most of these phrases are present, and apparently have roughly

⁸⁵ Other Semitic languages have cognates of the verb *פָּרָס/פָּרָס*, but a usage specifically describing the spreading of the hands in prayer seems to be absent in the other languages, except in Syriac, in which influence from Hebrew is a possibility. Cf. Ugaritic *prś* “extend, apply a coat of material, resurface” (*DULAT*, 2:683); Jewish Aramaic *pores* “spread” (Jastrow, 1233, with no mention of usage involving hands); Syriac *pras* “spread out, stretch out, unfold the wings, the hands,” D-stem *pares* “spread out the hands widely” (*CSD*, 462); Arabic *faraša* “spread” (Lane, 6:2369-70, with no mention of usage having to do with hands). BDB, 831, is apparently in error in its citation of “As.

the same meaning, in the poetic language of the Psalms. Thus these phrases seem to have coexisted in a synonymous relationship within Biblical Hebrew, although *nšw' yodayim* (+*adv*)_{prayer} may have been restricted to a poetic style or register, being replaced in other styles or registers by expressions using the root *prś*. Other phrases that may have been restricted to poetic language are *šittah kappayim* and *heri's yodayim*, but we cannot be sure, given the overall rarity of attestations of these idioms. The only phrase that cannot be shown to have been present in early Biblical Hebrew is *mo'al yodayim*, but again, since there is only one attestation, conclusions in this regard would be hazardous.

3.4. Clasping Hands with Another

3.4.1. The Divine Covenant Handclasp: *heh'zi'q (bə)R T ləP* “Grasp the R of T to P”

Several phrases in Biblical Hebrew, with a couple of examples in related Northwest Semitic languages, describe a deity (or, in one possible instance, a king) grasping the hand of a human in order to make a covenant and establish or reaffirm an intimate relationship. The most frequently occurring phrase of this type is *heh'zi'q (bə)R T ləP* “grasp the R of T to P,” which has six attestations (Isaiah 41:9, 13; 42:6; 45:1; Jeremiah 31:32; Job 8:20). Contextual elements that serve to link these passages include the following:

1. The descriptive setting, in most cases, is a prophetic oracle in which Yahweh recounts or predicts his own grasping of the hand of a human. Indicators of the human's favor or close relationship with Yahweh are mentioned. In Job 8:20, the descriptive setting is a poetic wisdom text describing the attitude of Yahweh toward righteous and wicked people.
2. Words and phrases that are conjoined with and/or in parallelism with the gesture phrase have to do with (a) the Target's being called, chosen, protected,

parašu, fly...prop. spread (wings)”; Akkadian has an adjective *parašu*, used to qualify names of precious stones, and a verb *parāšu* meaning “flatter, cajole” (*AHw*, 2:832; *CAD*, 12:180).

and helped by Yahweh, and (b) covenants. The gesture phrase is in close parallelism with *qarə' T* “call T” in two passages (Isaiah 41:9; 42:6); other parallel phrases, either in parallel cola or in surrounding verses, are *lo' mə'as T* “not reject T” (Isaiah 41:9; Job 8:20), *bəḥar T* “choose T” (Isaiah 41:9), *nəṣar T* “watch over T” (Isaiah 42:6), and *nətan T libri't ʿom* “make T a covenant of the people” (Isaiah 42:6). There is also reference to a covenant in the context of the gesture phrase in Jeremiah 31:31-33.

- (3.-4. There is no reference or allusion to a single event, nor is there a consistent pattern of similar result clauses.)
5. Speech that accompanies the performance of the gesture includes a pronouncement of the Target’s relationship to the Agent (“you are my servant,” Isaiah 41:9) and promises undertaken by the Agent to protect and/or do favors for the Target (“I will help you,” Isaiah 41:13; cf. “I will...watch over you,” Isaiah 42:6). The presence of a verbal promise accompanying the gesture is also implied in the Purpose clauses that follow the basic gesture phrase in some examples (see number 6 below).
 6. In two of the examples, the gesture phrase includes one or more Purpose constituents consisting of the preposition *lə* plus an infinitive verb (Isaiah 45:1; Jeremiah 31:32). These constituents describe promises undertaken by the Agent to do favors for the Target. This may be compared with the Purpose/Obligation constituent following the oath-taking gesture of lifting up the hand.
 7. Some examples have the preposition *bə* preceding the Receiver (Isaiah 42:6; 45:1; Jeremiah 31:32; Job 8:20), but the Receiver or Target can also appear as the direct object (Isaiah 41:9, 13). The Target is always human, and the Receiver, when mentioned, may be *yad* “hand” (Isaiah 42:6; Jeremiah 31:32; Job 8:20) or *yamiyn* “right hand” (Isaiah 41:13; 45:1).
 8. The Agent is always Yahweh.

Commentators, particularly those working on the Isaiah passages listed above, have suggested a number of interpretations that bear on the characterization of this contextual type. Some have focused on the conferral of a special office or status upon the Target, which features prominently in several of these passages.⁸⁶ Also prominent in this contextual type is the function of making a covenant, as seen in the following: 1) the presence of a Purpose/Obligation constituent following the basic gesture phrase in Isaiah 45:1 and Jeremiah 31:32; 2) the explicit

⁸⁶ Georg Fohrer, *Das Buch Jesaja*, vol. 3 (Zürich: Zwingli Verlag, 1964), 37-38; Klaus Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah: A Commentary on Isaiah 40-55*, transl. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 95-99; Joseph Blenkinsopp, *The Anchor Bible: Isaiah 40-55* (New York: Doubleday, 2002), 199-200, 211, 249. The most striking example of this element is the performative declaration “you are my servant” in Isaiah 41:8-9. In Jeremiah 31:31-32, Yahweh recounts having “become [Israel’s] husband,” implying the conferral of the status of wife.

mention of a “covenant” (*bəriʿt*) in Isaiah 42:6 and Jeremiah 31:31-32; and 3) the presence of divine self-predication, a formulaic element associated with the formation and renewal of covenants, in Isaiah 41:13 and 42:6.⁸⁷

It should be noted that the “covenant” referred to in the description of this contextual type bears little resemblance to the Near Eastern vassal treaties studied by George Mendenhall and Dennis McCarthy and applied by them to certain Hebrew Bible texts (including and especially the book of Deuteronomy and Joshua 24).⁸⁸ Unlike those covenants, these ones lack any mention of stipulations for the one receiving the covenant; all of the promises mentioned are rather undertaken by the one administering the covenant. This is similar to the covenants made between God and the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as described in Genesis, in which covenants God makes promises without giving lists of stipulations.⁸⁹

There are four other distinct gesture phrases that can confidently be ascribed a synonymous relationship with *həhʿziʿq (bə)R T ləP* based on contextual and semantic similarities: *təmak (+adv)_{covenant}* “hold (+adv)_{covenant},” *təmakəʰ yəmiʿn bəT* “of the right hand, hold T,” *ʿəhaz bəR T* “grasp the R of T,” and *ʿəhʿzəʰ yəmiʿn T* “of the right hand, grasp T.” As with other sets of phrases discussed above, scholars have occasionally grouped two or more of these phrases together as if they referred synonymously to a single gesture, yet there has been no systematic

⁸⁷ Morgan L. Phillips, “Divine Self-Predication in Deutero-Isaiah,” *Biblical Research* 16 (1971): 32-51. Some commentators see this formula as being more closely associated with theophany or revelation, as is the case with the directive to “fear not” (Isaiah 41:13); see James Muilenburg in *IB*, 5:455-56; Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah*, 96-97. The categories of divine covenant and theophany are, however, not mutually exclusive; the self-predication could simultaneously identify the one who is speaking as “the God of the servant Israel/Jacob and none other” (Balzer, *Deutero-Isaiah*, 96) and indicate “the nature of the Israelite God as one willing to lend himself in the covenant relationship with his people” (Phillips, “Divine Self-Predication,” 51).

⁸⁸ George E. Mendenhall, “Covenant Forms in Israelite Tradition,” *BA* 17 (1954): 50-76; Dennis J. McCarthy, *Treaty and Covenant: A Study in Form in the Ancient Oriental Documents and in the Old Testament* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1978).

⁸⁹ Cf. Mendenhall, “Covenant Forms,” 62. The passages in Genesis that describe the covenant with the patriarchs include Genesis 12:7; 13:14-17; 15:1, 4-7, 18-21; 17:1-22; 26:2-5; 28:13-15; 35:9-13. Many of the motifs in these passages, such as divine self-predication, Yahweh’s promise to be with and protect the recipient of the covenant, and the change of the recipient’s name, compare very well with the passages in Second Isaiah that mention the divine handclasp.

attempt to prove these synonymous connections.⁹⁰ In addition to these four phrases, there is one possible instance of a related phrase in a Phoenician inscription of king Kilamuwa of Sam'al, though the relationship of this phrase to the others is less certain due to differences in the general nature and function of the text.

3.4.1.1. *tōmak* (+adv)_{covenant} “Hold (+adv)_{covenant}”

The first synonymous phrase occurs in two main variations, both of which are found in the Hebrew Bible and refer to Yahweh grasping the hand of his chosen. These two variations are *tōmak T bī'mī'n šēdeq A* “hold T by the saving right hand of A” (Isaiah 41:10) and *tōmak bəT* “hold T” (Isaiah 42:1; Psalm 41:13). A fourth example of this phrase has been proposed in an Aramaic text in Demotic script (Papyrus Amherst 63); in this proposal, the phrase has the form *tmk ymyn T* “hold the right hand of T” (pAmherst 63 vi 16-17). However, this is an uncertain example in a fragmentary context and should not be given too much weight (for more discussion of this example, see chapter 2). We refer to the variations of this phrase together as *tōmak* (+adv)_{covenant} “hold (+adv)_{covenant}.”

In Isaiah 41:8-13 and 42:1-9, the phrases *hēh^εzī'q (bə)R T ləP* and *tōmak* (+adv)_{covenant} “hold (+adv)_{covenant}” occur together and appear to be used interchangeably. In the following citation of these two passages, the gesture phrases are in bold type, and other words that are parallel to both gesture phrases, or that show a thematic connection between the two phrases, are underlined>.

⁹⁰ See Falk, “Gestures Expressing Affirmation,” 268; Mitchell Dahood, *The Anchor Bible: Psalms I (1-50)* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1965), 252; Dahood, *The Anchor Bible: Psalms II (51-100)* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1974), 100, 194; Ackroyd, in *TDOT*, 5:407-8.

Isaiah 41:8-10,
13

(8) wə'atto^h yiśrō'el 'abdi^y
ya^{'a}qob 'ašer bəharti^yko...
(9) 'ašer **heḥ^εzaqti^yko** miqso^wt
hō'oreš
u^wme^{'a}ši^yle^yhō qəro[']ti^yko
wō'omar ləko 'abdi^y-[']atto^h

bəharti^yko wəlo['] mə'asti^yko

(10) 'al-ti^yro['] ki^y 'imməko-[']oni^y
'al-tištō['] ki^y-[']ani^y 'elohe^yko

'immašti^yko 'ap-[']zarti^yko

'ap-təmakti^yko bi^ymi^yn šidqi^y...

(13) ki^y 'ani^y YHWH 'elohe^yko
maḥ^azi^yq yəmi^ynəkō
hō'omer ləko 'al-ti^yro[']
'ani^y 'zarti^yko

Isaiah 42:1, 6

(1) hen 'abdi^y 'ətmək-bo^w

bəhi^yri^y rəšəto^h napši^y
nətatti^y ru^whi^y 'əlo^w
mišpoṭ laggo^wyim yo^wši^y' ...

(6) 'ani^y YHWH qəro[']ti^yko bəšədeq

wə'ahzeq bəyədəko
wə'əššərəko wə'əttenko
libri^yt 'əm lə'o^wr go^wyim

(8) You, Israel my servant,
Jacob whom I have chosen...
(9) you whom **I have grasped** from
the ends of the earth
and called you from its corners,
and said to you, “You are my
servant.”

I have chosen you and have not
rejected you”;
(10) do not fear, for I am with you;
do not gaze about fearfully, for I am
your God;

I have strengthened you, I have
helped you,
I have held you with my saving
right hand...

(13) For I am Yahweh your God,
he who grasps your right hand,
who says to you, “Do not fear,
I will help you.”

(1) Behold my servant, **whom I have**
held;
my chosen, whom my soul favors.
I have put my spirit upon him;
he will pronounce judgment upon the
nations...

(6) I am Yahweh. I have called you
in righteousness,
I have grasped your hand,
watched over you, and made you
a covenant of the people, a light to
the nations.

Both gesture phrases are associated, through parallelism and/or conjoining, with the Agent’s calling of the Target as his servant and chosen, and also with the Agent’s assertion of helping or having helped the Target. In addition to sharing the same descriptive setting and some of the same parallel phrases, the two gesture phrases also share the same Agent (Yahweh) and Target (Israel). In each passage, both gesture phrases could even be understood as referring to the same gesture event.

In Psalm 41:13, the descriptive setting is not a prophecy but a psalm addressed to Yahweh, in which the Psalmist acknowledges that Yahweh has held his (the Psalmist's) hand. The general theme of the Target's favor with the divine Agent is evident in the parallel phrases *həpaštə bī* "you delight in me" (verse 12) and *wattaššī^ybenī^y ləpənē^ykə lə 'o^wləm* "you have set me before you forever." Although there is no mention of a covenant in direct connection with the gesture here, the covenant could be presupposed as the basis of the special, intimate relationship to which the Psalmist draws attention.⁹¹

In two out of the three examples in the Hebrew Bible (Isaiah 42:1; Psalm 41:13), the preposition *bə* intervenes between the verb and the Target. This may be compared with the three examples of *heḥ^εzī^yq (bə)R T ləP* in which there is a Receiver linked obliquely to the verb by means of the preposition *bə* (Isaiah 42:6; 45:1; Jeremiah 31:32). The more direct construction with the Target as direct object of the verb *təmak* also occurs, and this may be compared with *heḥ^εzaqtī^ykə* "I have grasped you" in Isaiah 41:9. In Isaiah 41:10, the right hand is mentioned as the Sender. Although none of the examples of *heḥ^εzī^yq (bə)R T ləP* specify that it is the right hand of the Agent that grasps the Target's right hand, this is not particularly unexpected. The two gesture phrases in Isaiah 41:8-13 can plausibly be understood in combination as describing a handclasp involving the right hands of both parties: *'ap-təmakti^ykə bī^ymī^yn šidqī^y...ki^y 'ani^y YHWH 'əlohe^ykə maḥ^azī^yq yəmi^ynəkə* "I have held you with my saving right hand...For I am Yahweh your God, he who grasps your right hand."⁹² The right hand may also occur as the

⁹¹ The theme of covenants is not wholly absent from the context. In verse 10, there is mention of a friend in whom the Psalmist trusted and who turned against the Psalmist, and Dahood suggests that this refers to a man with whom the Psalmist had made a covenant; see Dahood, *Psalms I*, 251. From this perspective, the passage may be understood as saying, in effect, "My friend with whom I covenanted has turned against me, but you, O Yahweh, are faithful and will live up to the covenant you made with me." Other Psalms that have lexical and thematic links with this one do explicitly deal with divine covenants; see Psalm 7:5, 9-11; 21:7-8; 25:2-3, 7, 10; Dahood, *Psalms I*, 40, 42-43, 133, 156-57.

⁹² Matthew Brown (personal communication) independently makes this observation. Fohrer, *Buch Jesaja*, 37, refers to *das Ergreifen der rechten oder mit der rechten Hand* in this passage, presumably implying the simultaneous use

Receiver in the phrase *tmk ymyn T* “hold the right hand of T” in pAmherst 63 vi 16-17, but this example is too dubious to give adequate support in this case, given the fragmentary nature of the text.

The standard lexicons gloss the verb *tōmak* as “grasp, lay hold of, support” or the like.⁹³ This verb thus overlaps semantically with *hēh^ēzī^q*, “strengthen, grasp, take hold of, seize, support.”⁹⁴ Translators vary in how they interpret the verb *tōmak* in the passages under discussion; most render the verb abstractly as “uphold” or “sustain,” but Dahood and Eaton render it more concretely as “grasp.”⁹⁵ Although there is no way to be absolutely certain that the verb in these passages is meant to be taken in a concrete sense, this is certainly a valid option, so this does not pose a substantive challenge to taking this phrase as synonymous with the others discussed in this section.

3.4.1.2. *tōmak^h yōmīⁿ bəT* “Of the Right Hand, Hold T”

Another phrase referring to the covenant handclasp is *tōmak^h yōmīⁿ bəT* “of the right hand, hold T” (Psalm 63:9). This phrase differs from the one discussed immediately above in that the Sender, namely the Agent’s right hand, functions grammatically as the subject of the verb rather than as an adverbial argument.

of the right hands of both parties. Goldingay, *Message of Isaiah 40-55*, 111-12, writes: “It would have been easy to refer again to Yhwh’s hand, but referring instead to Israel’s hand brings about a change and keeps attention right to the end of the line by the novelty. The ‘right hand’ being Israel’s, not Yhwh’s, it is grasped, not grasping. The significance of the grasping also thus changes.” In the opinion of the present writer, Goldingay’s interpretation loses sight of the prophet’s intended imagery by focusing too much on the prophet’s word choice. Naturally, the fact that only Israel’s right hand is mentioned in verse 13 does not imply that Yahweh was using his left, and a “grasped” hand can, of course, also be “grasping.”

⁹³ BDB, 1069; *HALOT*, 4:1751.

⁹⁴ BDB, 304-5; *HALOT*, 1:303-4; *DCH*, 3:187-89.

⁹⁵ Dahood, *Psalms I*, 249, 252-53; John H. Eaton, *Festal Drama in Deutero-Isaiah* (London: SPCK, 1979), 48; Eaton, *Kingship and the Psalms* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1986), 45, 143.

The descriptive setting in Psalm 63 is that of a psalm addressed to Yahweh, acknowledging that Yahweh has held the Psalmist’s hand; this is similar to Psalm 41:13, where the phrase *tōmak* (+*adv*)_{covenant} is used. The phrase *hōyō^h ‘ezrōtō^h lōT* “be a help to T” (Psalm 63:8), among others, is parallel to *tōmākō^h yōmī^yn bōT* in this passage, which establishes a contextual link with *heh^ēzī^yq (bō)R T lōP* and *tōmak* (+*adv*)_{covenant} in Isaiah 41:10, 13. Thus *tōmākō^h yōmī^yn bōT* is consistent with the other phrases discussed in this section in terms of descriptive setting, structural alignment, and the relationship between the Target and the Agent of the gesture phrase.

The use of the preposition *bō* before the Target in this phrase may be compared with the use of the same preposition before the Target in the phrase *tōmak* (+*adv*)_{covenant} and occasionally before the Receiver in the phrase *heh^ēzī^yq (bō)R T lōP*. The verb *tōmak* was discussed above in section 3.4.1.1; thus there is nothing new that would present a challenge to considering this a synonymous phrase.

3.4.1.3. *tmk T lyd* “Hold T by the Hand”

A possibly synonymous phrase using a cognate of the Hebrew verb *tōmak* is used to describe a king’s action of clasping hands with a subject people in a Phoenician inscription (Kilamuwa I, *KAI* 24:13). The phrase is *tmk T lyd* “hold T by the hand.”

The context in this instance is quite dissimilar compared to the other phrases, perhaps due to broad differences in the type of text. This is a royal stela, not a prophecy or psalm, and its style is more laconic than that of most biblical texts. There are no surrounding words or phrases that shed light on the meaning of the gesture phrase in this text, except for the result clause, *whmt št nbš km nbš ytm b`m* “and they felt (toward me) as an orphan feels toward a mother.” This

could possibly indicate the formation of a covenant relationship between the king and the Target (the people *MŠKBM*), but there is not enough information to establish this with certainty. The Agent of the gesture phrase is an earthly king, not a deity; however, this is not an irreconcilable difference, since there are other examples of Yahweh performing gestures that are also performed by humans (the most relevant comparison being the raised hand gesture of oath-taking, for which see above).

The prepositional phrase denoting the Receiver is different from what we have encountered with the other phrases discussed in this section. Instead of being a direct object or being introduced by the preposition *b*, it is introduced by the preposition *l*.⁹⁶ While it is clear that this phrase describes a gesture of grasping the hand (whether concrete or figurative), the relationship of this phrase to the others discussed above is less clear.

3.4.1.4. *ʿḥaz bəR T* “Grasp the R of T”

Another phrase that is synonymous in the context of Yahweh’s entering into a covenant with his chosen is *ʿḥaz bəR T* “grasp the R of T,” which has one attestation, Psalm 73:23. This is a Psalm addressed to Yahweh and mentioning Yahweh’s having held the Psalmist’s hand. In this passage, the gesture phrase is parallel to *ḥṣyḏ^h T tṣmīⁿd ʿim A* “of T, always be with A,” *hinḥṣ^h T* “lead T” (verse 24a), and *lṣqah T* “receive T” (verse 24b).

The context of this gesture phrase in Psalm 73 has been interpreted in diverse ways: as a reference to assumption into a blessed afterlife,⁹⁷ as a recollection of being inducted into the

⁹⁶ The preposition *b* does exist in Phoenician, including at Sam’al, so the use of *l* in this idiom is striking. See Stanislav Segert, *A Grammar of Phoenician and Punic* (Munich: Verlag C. H. Beck, 1976), 207-8, 285; Maria Giulia Amadasi Guzzo, *Phönizisch-Punische Grammatik* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1999), 180.

⁹⁷ Dahood, *Psalms II*, 194-95.

mysteries of the Israelite temple,⁹⁸ and as a figurative expression of God’s favor of the king.⁹⁹ The latter two interpretations are basically compatible with the idea that the handclasp accompanies the making of a covenant and the conferral of a special status, even though, as with the other Psalms passages that mention the divine handclasp, there is no explicit reference to a covenant or to words spoken in conjunction with the handclasp.¹⁰⁰ It is possible that the authors of these Psalms were more concerned with the symbolic aspects of the ritual handclasp than with its functional aspects, unlike the author of Isaiah 41-42 and 45.

In terms of lexicon and grammar, the phrase *’oḥaz bəR T* is easily understood as synonymous with *heḥ^εzi^νq (bə)R T ləP* and the other phrases discussed above. The preposition *bə* precedes the Receiver in the gesture phrase, as in some examples of *heḥ^εzi^νq (bə)R T ləP*. The verb *’oḥaz*, “grasp, take hold, take possession,”¹⁰¹ is similar in meaning to *heḥ^εzi^νq* and *təmak* (see above, section 3.4.1.1).

3.4.1.5. *’oḥ^az^h yomi^νn T* “Of the Right Hand, Grasp T”

The last synonymous phrase belonging to this contextual type is *’oḥ^az^h yomi^νn T* “of the right hand, grasp T” (Psalm 139:9-10). This phrase bears approximately the same relationship to *’oḥaz bəR T* that *təmak^h yomi^νn bəT* bears to *təmak (+adv)_{covenant}*. As with the latter two phrases, *’oḥ^az^h yomi^νn T* is essentially the same as *’oḥaz bəR T*, except that the Sender is the subject of the verb rather than an adverbial complement. The descriptive setting of the phrase *’oḥ^az^h yomi^νn T* is a Psalm that addresses Yahweh and refers to Yahweh’s grasping of the Psalmist’s

⁹⁸ Heinrich Ewald, *Commentary on the Psalms* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1880), 2:132; Keel, *Symbolism of the Biblical World*, 258-59.

⁹⁹ Eaton, *Kingship and the Psalms*, 77.

¹⁰⁰ Eaton (ibid.) writes that “God conducts [the king] by the agency of his ‘counsel’ (v. 24a), which is here rather like the personified word and the covenant-graces which assist in guidance.” See also Eaton’s discussion of the covenant relationship as the basis for the king’s ability to claim divine privileges, *ibid.*, 150-54.

¹⁰¹ BDB, 28.

hand, like the other phrases described above. The gesture phrase is parallel to *hinḥ^atḥ^h yḥd T* “of the hand, lead T,” which is similar to *hinḥ^h T* “lead T,” a phrase that is parallel to *’ḥaz bḥR T* “grasp the R of T” in Psalm 73:23-24.

There is nothing new in terms of lexicon or grammar to make this phrase different from the others that have been discussed above. The phrase refers to the use of the right hand in grasping a person. Although the Receiver is not made explicit, this is also the case in some examples of *hḥ^ḗzī^yq (bḥ)R T lḥP* and *tḥmak (+adv)_{covenant}*. As discussed in the introduction to chapter 2 and shown both in that chapter and in the present section, contextual links among the examples of the latter two gesture phrases argue that the forms without an expressed Receiver are just variants of a full gesture phrase with an expressed Receiver. Thus *’ḥ^azḥ^h yḥmīⁿ T* can plausibly be understood as having the same sense as the other phrases already discussed.

3.4.1.6. Distribution of Synonymous Phrases for the Divine Covenant Handclasp

We have discussed five synonymous phrases used to describe the gesture that we refer to as the “divine covenant handclasp,” all five of which are almost exclusively attested in the Hebrew Bible.¹⁰²

¹⁰² One possible exception is what has been reconstructed as *tmk ymyn T* “hold the right hand of T” in pAmherst 63 vi 16-17. For discussion, see chapter 2 and section 3.4.1.1 above.

Table 12. Frequency and Distribution of Synonymous Gesture Phrases in the Context of the Divine Covenant Handclasp

Full gesture phrase	Attestations	Notes on distribution
<i>hēḥēzīḃq</i> (<i>bəR T ləP</i>) “grasp the R of T to P”	6	Second Isaiah (4), Jeremiah (1), Job (1)
<i>təmak</i> (+ <i>adv</i>) _{covenant} “hold (+ <i>adv</i>) _{covenant} ”	3	Second Isaiah (2), Psalms (1)
<i>təməḳḳ^h yḳmiḃn bəT</i> “of the right hand, hold T”	1	Psalms
<i>ḳḥaz bəR T</i> “grasp the R of T”	1	Psalms
<i>ḳḥ^azḳ^h yḳmiḃn T</i> “of the right hand, grasp T”	1	Psalms

Among these phrases, the verb *təmak* is used in both Second Isaiah and the Psalms, while *hēḥēzīḃq* is used in Second Isaiah but not Psalms, and *ḳḥaz* is used only in the Psalms. This would seem to indicate that gesture phrases with *ḳḥaz* are peculiar to the language of the Psalms, while phrases with *hēḥēzīḃq* are peculiar to other genres, especially prophecy. The distribution of gesture phrases with *təmak* is less restricted. The meager relevant information from other Northwest Semitic languages basically fits with this picture. There is one gesture phrase with a cognate of *ḳḥaz* in an Ugaritic poetic narrative (though this phrase belongs to a different contextual type),¹⁰³ and there are two possible occurrences of similar gesture phrases using *təmak* outside of Hebrew.¹⁰⁴ These observations apply only to the gesture phrases using these verbs; the verbs themselves, independent of the gesture phrases, do not follow the same distribution.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ *ḳḥd R T* “grasp the R of T” in *KTU* 1.17 i 30-31. See chapter 2 for discussion.

¹⁰⁴ *tmk T lyd* “hold T by the hand” in *KAI* 24:13 (Phoenician), *tmk ymyn T* “hold the right hand of T” in pAmherst 63 vi 16-17 (Aramaic).

¹⁰⁵ It appears from BDB, 28 and 304-5, that *ḳḥaz* is more common than *hēḥēzīḃq* in the Psalms, but the latter is attested in the Psalms, and there are numerous attestations of *ḳḥaz* in the prophetic books.

3.4.2. A Non-Ritual Type: Grasping the Hand of an Elder to Lead Him or Her

There are two gesture phrases referring to the grasping of the hand that refer not to a ritual act performed by Yahweh and related to covenants but rather to a quotidian act performed by a younger male for an incapacitated parent or elder. The phrase *'ahd R T* “grasp the R of T” is used to describe one of the duties of a son to his father, leading him by the hand when he (the father) is drunk, in the Ugaritic epic of Aqhatu (*KTU* 1.17 i 30-31). In Hebrew, the equivalent phrase is *hēh'zī'q bəR T* “grasp the R of T”; this phrase is used to describe a young man leading the blind Samson (Judges 16:26) and to describe what a son would do for his mother when the latter is intoxicated (Isaiah 51:18). These phrases are similar, both in terms of context and in terms of general meaning, and can therefore be considered synonymous. Since the Ugaritic verb *ahd* is cognate with Hebrew *'ḥaz*,¹⁰⁶ this provides another example of the synonymy of this etymon with the Hebrew verb *hēh'zī'q* in phrases referring to the grasping of the hand. The distribution in this case is consistent with what was observed above: *hēh'zī'q* occurs in prophecy (second Isaiah) and in prose narrative (the story of Samson in Judges), while the cognate of *'ḥaz* occurs in Ugaritic poetic narrative, which is comparable to the Hebrew Psalms in terms of style.

3.5. Unconnected Gesture Phrases

3.5.1. Ritual

There are several gesture phrases that have not been included in the main part of this chapter because they do not belong to a contextual type shared by other gesture phrases and are therefore irrelevant to the issue of synonymy. Since some of these phrases do occur in a ritual

¹⁰⁶ *DULAT*, 1:36.

context and play a part in the analysis in the chapters to follow, we list them here for the purpose of reference.

Table 13. Ritual Gesture Phrases without Contextually Parallel Synonyms

Full gesture phrase	References	Ritual context/function
<i>nōtan yōd (+adv)_{pledge}</i> “put forth the hand (+adv) _{pledge} ”	2 Kings 10:15 (2x); Ezekiel 17:18 (or oath?); Lamentations 5:6; 1 Chronicles 29:23-24	pledge of allegiance
<i>nōtan yōd ləT</i> “put forth the hand to T”	2 Chronicles 30:8	approaching the temple
<i>nōtan yōd</i> “put forth the hand”	Jeremiah 50:14-15	surrender
<i>nōśō` yōdayim`el-T_{add}</i> “lift up the hands to T _{add} ”	Leviticus 9:22	priestly blessing

Note: The phrase *nōtan yōd (+adv)_{pledge}* occurs in two variants: (a) *nōtan yōd taḥat T* “put forth the hand in submission to T,” (b) *nōtan yōd (adv)T ləP_{exp}* “put forth the hand (toward) T to P_{exp}.”

For further discussion of these phrases and their contexts, see under these phrases in chapter 2.

3.5.2. Non-Ritual or Ambiguous

Other unconnected phrases, although they share the same basic gesture phrases as those discussed in the main part of this chapter, lack a definite ritual context but have instead such functions as invitation (*nōtō^h yōd* “extend the hand,” Proverbs 1:24), entreaty of a human (*perās yōdayim`el-T* “spread out the hands toward T,” Isaiah 65:1-2; *perās bəyōdayim* “spread out the hands,” Lamentations 1:17), helping the poor (*heḥ^zi^yq yad T* “grasp the hand of T,” Ezekiel 16:49), and supporting another’s hand (*tōmak bi^yde^y T* “hold the hands of T,” Exodus 17:12). Some passages containing gesture phrases are obscure to the point that both the synonymous relationship of the phrase and its function are in doubt (cf. *nōśō` yōdayim* “lift up the hands” in Habakkuk 3:10 and *heḥ^zi^yq yad T* in Zechariah 14:13). These unconnected phrases provide a

hint of the richness of the verbal repertoire for describing gestures in ancient Northwest Semitic languages. However, at the present state of the availability of data, their contribution to the understanding of ritual gestures in Northwest Semitic culture is limited. One such contribution is the use of *perás (bə)yodayim* in supplication to humans, which shows that the lifting of hands in prayer denoted by *perás kappayim* and *perás yodayim* is not limited to divine addressees.

3.6. Summary

In this chapter, we have grouped many of the gesture phrases discussed in chapter 2 into sets of synonymous phrases, based on contextual links and general semantic similarity. Each of these sets of full gesture phrases, we have argued, refers to a single ritual gesture. Five main sets of synonymous phrases referring to ritual gestures have been discussed: (1) the gesture of destruction or exertion of supernatural power, (2) the oath gesture of raising one hand, (3) the two-handed oath gesture, (4) the prayer gesture of raising both hands, and (5) the divine covenant handclasp. In addition, we have mentioned, in passing, four phrases that refer to ritual gestures but are not part of a set of synonymous gesture phrases (section 3.5.1). We have therefore touched on nine distinct ritual gestures; the following table summarizes the phrases used to describe these gestures:

Table 14. Summary of Full Gesture Phrases Grouped by Synonymy

Gesture and context	Full gesture phrases	References
1. raising/extending the right hand: destruction or exertion of supernatural power	<i>nəṭə^h yəd (bəI) ‘al-T</i> “extend the hand (with I) against T”	Exodus 7:5, 19; 8:1-2, 12-13; 9:22-23; 10:12-13, 21-22; 14:16, 21, 26-27; Joshua 8:18-19, 26; Isaiah 5:25; 9:10-11, 16, 19-20; 10:4; 14:26-27; 23:11; Jeremiah 21:5; 51:25; Ezekiel 6:14; 14:9, 13; 16:27; 25:7, 13, 16; 30:25; 35:3; Zephaniah 1:4; 2:13; 1 Chronicles 21:16
“	<i>nəṭə^h zəro^a</i> “extend the arm”	Exodus 6:6; Deuteronomy 4:34; 5:15; 7:19; 9:29; 11:2; 1 Kings 8:41-42; 2 Kings 17:36; Jeremiah 27:5; 32:17, 21; Ezekiel 20:33-34; Psalm 136:10-12; 2 Chronicles 6:32
“	<i>šəlah yəd</i> “stretch out the hand”	Exodus 3:20; 9:15; 2 Samuel 24:16; <u>uncertain</u> : Exodus 24:11; Job 1:11, 12; 2:5
“	<i>hiṭṭə^h yəd</i> “extend the hand”	Isaiah 31:3; Jeremiah 6:12; 15:6
“	<i>heni^yp yəd ‘al-T_{add}</i> “elevate the hand against T _{add} ”	Isaiah 11:15; 19:16; 30:32; Zechariah 2:13
“	<i>heri^ym yəd bəI</i> “raise the hand with I”	Exodus 7:20; 17:11-12; Numbers 20:11
“	<i>nəśə[’] yəd/I ‘al-T_{add}</i> “lift up the hand/I against T _{add} ”	Isaiah 10:24-26; Psalm 10:12
“	<i>rəmə^h yəd ‘al-T</i> “of the hand, be high against T”	Isaiah 26:11; Micah 5:8
“	<i>nəṭə^h yəmi^yn</i> “extend the right hand”	Exodus 15:12
“	<i>nətan yəd bəT</i> “put forth the hand against T”	Exodus 7:4
“	<i>rəmə^h yəmi^yn</i> “of the right hand, be high”	Psalm 89:14

Table 14, continued

Gesture and context	Full gesture phrases	References
2. raising/extending one hand: oath	<i>nəśəw' yəd (+adv)_{oath}</i> “lift up the hand (+adv) _{oath} ”	Exodus 6:8; Numbers 14:30; Deuteronomy 32:40-41; Ezekiel 20:5-6, 15, 23, 28, 42; 36:7; 44:12; 47:14; Psalm 106:26-27; Nehemiah 9:15
“	<i>nətan yəd ləP_{obl}</i> “put forth the hand to P _{obl} ”	Ezra 10:18-19; <u>uncertain</u> : Ezekiel 17:18
“	<i>heri'y m yəd 'el-T</i> “raise the hand toward T”	Genesis 14:22-23
“	<i>heni'p yəd 'al-T_{ref}</i> “elevate the hand concerning T _{ref} ”	Job 31:21-22
3. raising both hands (A): oath	<i>heri'y m yəmi'y n u'šəmo 'l</i> “raise the right hand and the left hand”	Daniel 12:7
“	<i>nš' ydyn lT</i> “lift up the hands to T”	Panammu I, <i>KAI</i> 214:29-30
4. raising both hands (B): prayer	<i>nəśəw' yədayim (+adv)_{prayer}</i> “lift up the hands (+adv) _{prayer} ”	Kirta, <i>KTU</i> 1.14 ii 22-23, iv 5; Rites for the Vintage, <i>KTU</i> 1.41 55; Zakkur, <i>KAI</i> 202 A:11; pAmherst 63 ix 17-19; Psalms 28:2; 134:2
“	<i>nəśəw' kappayim</i> “lift up the palms”	Psalms 63:5; 119:48; 141:2; Lamentations 2:19; 3:41
“	<i>pəraś kappayim (adv)T_{dir} 'el-ləT_{add}</i> “spread the palms toward T _{dir} to T _{add} ”	Exodus 9:29, 33; 1 Kings 8:22, 38, 54; Psalm 44:21-22; Job 11:13-15; Ezra 9:5; 2 Chronicles 6:12-13 (2x), 29-30
“	<i>pəraś kappayim</i> “spread out the palms”	Isaiah 1:15; Jeremiah 4:31
“	<i>pəraś yədayim 'el-T</i> “spread out the hands toward T”	Isaiah 25:10-11; Psalm 143:6
“	<i>šittah kappayim</i> “spread forth the palms”	Psalm 88:10
“	<i>heri'y š yədayim</i> “stretch out the hands with quick movement(s)”	Psalm 68:32

Table 14, continued

Gesture and context	Full gesture phrases	References
“	<i>mo' al yadayim</i> “putting up of the hands”	Nehemiah 8:6
5. clasping right hands: covenant, formation of close relationship	<i>heh^ezi'q (ba)R T laP</i> “grasp the R of T to P”	Isaiah 41:9, 13; 42:6; 45:1; Jeremiah 31:32; Job 8:20
“	<i>tamak (+adv)_{covenant}</i> “hold (+adv) _{covenant} ”	Isaiah 41:10; 42:1; Psalm 41:13; <u>uncertain</u> : pAmherst 63 vi 16-17
“	<i>tamak^h yomi'n baT</i> “of the right hand, hold T”	Psalm 63:9
“	<i>'ohaz baR T</i> “grasp the R of T”	Psalm 73:23
“	<i>'oh^az^h yomi'n T</i> “of the right hand, grasp T”	Psalm 139:9-10
6. putting forth one hand (A): pledge of allegiance	<i>natan yad (+adv)_{pledge}</i> “put forth the hand (+adv) _{pledge} ”	2 Kings 10:15; Lamentations 5:6; 1 Chronicles 29:23-24; <u>uncertain</u> : Ezekiel 17:18
7. putting forth one hand (B): approaching the temple	<i>natan yad laT</i> “put forth the hand to T”	2 Chronicles 30:8
8. putting forth one hand (C): surrender	<i>natan yad</i> “put forth the hand”	Jeremiah 50:14-15
9. raising both hands (C): priestly blessing	<i>nas' yadayim 'el-T_{add}</i> “lift up the hands to T _{add} ”	Leviticus 9:22

In addition to these phrases describing ritual gestures, we have discussed several phrases used to describe gestures that are either non-ritual or ambiguous as to their contextual type (sections 3.2.3, 3.4.2, and 3.5.2). This has shown how some of the same basic gesture phrases that are used to describe ritual gestures may, with different adverbial complements and in different contexts, describe completely different gestures; it has also allowed us to explore the principles of gesture phrase synonymy in non-ritual as well as ritual contexts.

In the following chapters, the discussion will focus on sets of synonymous phrases for ritual gestures rather than on individual phrases, except in cases where only a single phrase is attested, according to what is shown in the preceding table. In chapter 4, we will seek to link these sets of phrases with visual representations of gestures in ancient Near Eastern art, comparing the contexts of the gestures in both types of data and checking the various nuances of the phrases in each set against the details of the gestures as they are depicted.

Chapter 4

Gestures in Northwest Semitic Art

4.1. Aim and Methodology

The previous two chapters have been devoted to sorting out the many phrases used in Northwest Semitic literature to refer to ritual gestures of raising the hand(s), extending the hand(s), and clasping another person's hand. In this chapter, we examine the same kinds of gestures depicted in Northwest Semitic art from the Levant. This examination has two goals. The first goal is to understand the range of contexts in which ritual gestures occur in Northwest Semitic art. The second goal, in keeping with the overall plan of chapters 2-4, is to establish correspondences between gestures depicted in art and phrases found in literature.

Groundwork for the study of an indigenous Levantine art tradition has been laid in studies by William Stevenson Smith, Janice L. Crowley, Helene J. Kantor, and Marian H. Feldman, who have sought to distinguish the various art traditions represented among objects from the Late Bronze Age found in Egypt, the Aegean, and the eastern Mediterranean.¹ As defined by Feldman, the indigenous Levantine tradition consists of an assortment of relatively small objects found within the narrow region between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan and Orontes rivers, plus an "eastward spur" taking in the plain of Aleppo. The objects include metal and stone full-round sculpture, stone relief stelae, metal plaques, carved ivories, and cylinder seals. "The thematic repertoire" of these objects "focuses on isolated human figures," while

¹ William Stevenson Smith, *Interconnections in the Ancient Near East: A Study of the Relationships between the Arts of Egypt, the Aegean, and Western Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965); Janice L. Crowley, *The Aegean and the East: An Investigation into the Transference of Artistic Motifs between the Aegean, Egypt, and the Near East in the Bronze Age* (Jonsered: Paul Åströms förlag, 1989); Helene J. Kantor, "Syro-Palestinian Ivories," *JNES* 15 (1956): 153-74; Marian H. Feldman, "Luxurious Forms: Redefining a Mediterranean 'International Style,' 1400-1200 B.C.E.," *The Art Bulletin* 84 (2002): 6-29.

“extended narratives are rare.” The range of specific motifs includes, among others, a seated figure receiving homage, a standing figure raising one or both hands with the palm(s) facing outward, a smiting figure, and a standing nude female in frontal view.² Although discussion of this tradition has tended to focus on the prolific Late Bronze Age, the range of object types and motifs has clear antecedents in the Middle Bronze Age Levant.³ This tradition has extensively appropriated motifs from Mesopotamia and Egypt, especially the latter, retaining the general symbolic significance of the motifs but adapting them to local religious and political contexts.⁴ Nevertheless, the Levantine tradition is to be distinguished from the eclectic “international style,” which eschews indicators of local origin, is absent of ideology associated with any particular nation, and was likely connected with the international exchange of luxury items between great kings in the Late Bronze Age.⁵ Since the indigenous Levantine tradition (unlike the “international style”) is oriented to local concerns and ideology, borrowing foreign motifs only to incorporate them within locally situated contexts, it is reasonable to interpret this tradition and the gestures that feature in it as representative of Northwest Semitic culture.

For the Iron Age, R. D. Barnett, Irene Winter, and others have demonstrated that monumental relief sculptures, stelae, and carved ivories found in the Levant, as well as portable luxury items (primarily ivories) carried as booty to imperial centers like Nimrud, can be divided into three major regional traditions: the “North Syrian” or “Late Hittite” tradition centered in the upper Euphrates region, the “Syrian” or “South Syrian” tradition centered in Damascus and other inland locales, and the “Phoenician” tradition centered in the cities of the eastern Mediterranean

² Feldman, “Luxurious Forms,” 11; cf. Crowley, *Aegean and the East*, 120-23, 156, 212, 462, 475, 491.

³ See Aharon Kempinski, “The Middle Bronze Age,” in *The Archaeology of Ancient Israel*, ed. Amnon Ben-Tor, trans. R. Greenberg (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 199-205.

⁴ Feldman, “Luxurious Forms,” 6, 8-9, 12, 14-17.

⁵ Smith, *Interconnections in the Ancient Near East*, 32, 44, 97; Crowley, *Aegean and the East*, 221-29; Feldman, “Luxurious Forms,” 6-8, 17-24.

coast.⁶ It is the “Phoenician” and “Syrian” traditions which show the greatest degree of continuity with the indigenous Levantine tradition of the Bronze Age. For example, the motif of a standing figure raising one hand with the palm facing outward is prominent in both of these traditions.⁷ By contrast, the “North Syrian” or “Late Hittite” style consists of several subgroups, some of which are best understood as predominantly non-Semitic.⁸ The majority of monumental reliefs and stelae showing the smiting god motif, for example, properly belong to the Luwian sphere (see below, section 4.2.2). In cases in which an art piece from the Iron Age Levant is inscribed, the script and language of the inscription (whether hieroglyphic Luwian or alphabetic Phoenician or Aramaic) can, in combination with comparative analysis of the iconography, help to ascertain the cultural sphere to which the piece belongs.

An important type of object in the art of the Iron Age is the stamp seal, which may be viewed in terms of function and iconography as a successor to the cylinder seal and scarab of the Bronze Age.⁹ Again, a variety of traditions can be discerned. Stamp seals often bear short alphabetic inscriptions giving the name of the seal owner; variations in the script, orthography, and onomasticon of the inscriptions correspond to variations in the layout and the choice of iconographic elements. This correspondence of varying aspects provides evidence of regionally

⁶ R. D. Barnett, “The Nimrud Ivories and the Art of the Phoenicians,” *Iraq* 2 (1935): 179-210; Irene Winter, “Phoenician and North Syrian Ivory Carving in Historical Context: Questions of Style and Distribution,” *Iraq* 38 (1976): 1-22; Irene Winter, “Carved Ivory Furniture Panels from Nimrud: A Coherent Subgroup of the North Syrian Style,” *MMJ* 11 (1977): 25-54; Irene Winter, “Is There a South Syrian Style of Ivory Carving in the Early First Millennium B.C.?” *Iraq* 43 (1981): 101-130, pls. 6-17; Irene Winter, “Carchemish ša kišad puratti,” *Anatolian Studies* 33 (1983): 180-81, 185-86; Georgina Herrmann and Stuart Laidlaw, *Ivories from the North West Palace* (Ivories from Nimrud VI; London: British Institute for the Study of Iraq, 2008), 75-100.

⁷ Barnett, “Nimrud Ivories,” 183 (no. 3), pl. 23.4; Winter, “Is There a South Syrian Style,” pl. 17b.

⁸ Winter, “Carved Ivory Furniture Panels”; cf. Ekrem Akurgal, *The Art of the Hittites* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1962), 124-42.

⁹ Tallay Ornan, “The Mesopotamian Influence on West Semitic Inscribed Seals: A Preference for the Depiction of Mortals,” in *Studies in the Iconography of Northwest Semitic Inscribed Seals*, ed. Benjamin Sass and Christoph Uehlinger (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993), 53; Eric Gubel, “The Iconography of Inscribed Phoenician Glyptic,” in *ibid.*, 102-4.

based artistic idioms.¹⁰ In some cases, particularly with the Phoenician seals, we can see a high degree of continuity with the Bronze Age Levantine tradition; for example, the motifs of the seated figure receiving homage and the standing human figure with palm(s) outward, among others, are prominent and show little substantive variation from their Bronze Age antecedents.¹¹ Other traditions incorporate predominantly Mesopotamian motifs.¹²

It is therefore possible to recognize some combinations of object type and artistic motif that have consistently been associated with Northwest Semitic culture from the Bronze Age through the Iron Age. These include, inter alia, small works in metal, stone, and ivory that depict human or divine figures engaged in receiving homage, standing with the palm(s) outward, and raising one hand as if to smite. Although these object types and motifs are not exclusively Northwest Semitic, various other criteria, such as provenance, layout, telltale design elements, and inscriptions, help to distinguish the Northwest Semitic use of these motifs from the art of other cultures. The terms *Levantine art* and *Northwest Semitic art* are herein used interchangeably to describe objects meeting these criteria.

The analysis of Northwest Semitic art presents certain difficulties beyond those involved in the study of the art of the neighboring cultures of Mesopotamia and Egypt. There are no long sequences of scenes such as those carved on the walls of Mesopotamian palaces and Egyptian tombs and temples. Only rarely is a Northwest Semitic sculpture or scene accompanied by an inscription (aside from the names of seal owners inscribed on Iron Age stamp seals), while it is

¹⁰ This is not to say that identifying a seal's origin based on script and design is always simple and unproblematic; problems arise, for example, when diagnostic elements are absent. See André Lemaire, "Les critères non- iconographiques de la classification des sceaux nord-ouest sémitiques inscrits," in Sass and Uehlinger, *Studies in the Iconography*, 1-26; Dominique Parayre, "A propos des sceaux ouest-sémitiques: le rôle de l'iconographie dans l'attribution d'un sceau à un aire culturelle et à un atelier," in *ibid.*, 27-51. Our use of the term *idiom* follows that of Feldman, "Luxurious Forms," 7: "subsets within a tradition that are not specific or homogeneous enough to equate with a workshop or artist."

¹¹ Gubel, "Iconography of Inscribed Phoenician Glyptic," 105 (no. 10), 117 (nos. 35, 36), 119 (nos. 41-43, 45-51), etc.

¹² See Ornan, "Mesopotamian Influence."

commonplace for art in Mesopotamia and Egypt to bear inscriptions, sometimes even captions that identify the figures in the scene and describe what they are doing. In some cases, scholars have sought to identify scenes depicted in Northwest Semitic art with events narrated in textual sources, but the scarcity of inscriptions, and sometimes the poor state of preservation of both the relevant text and the art piece, tend to make these proposals tenuous.¹³ For these reasons, comparison with examples of gestures in Mesopotamian and Egyptian art plays a key role in the contextual analysis undertaken in this chapter, particularly in cases in which contextual indicators for a gesture are lacking in Levantine art but are present in Mesopotamian and/or Egyptian art.¹⁴ However, in cases in which Levantine examples furnish sufficient contextual indicators, preference is given to these, as the meaning of a gesture may vary from one culture to the next.

As has been mentioned, one of the goals of this chapter is to establish correspondences between gestures depicted in art and phrases used to describe gestures in literature. The fact that such correspondences exist is not to be taken for granted, as some gestures depicted in art might never be mentioned in literature, and some gestures described in literature might never find expression in art. However, one would expect that the most common ritual gestures in a society would have a place in both literature and art, especially when the kinds of contexts in which the gestures are performed have a place in both. The feasibility of finding such correspondences has been demonstrated in studies of ritual gestures of other ancient cultures, including classical

¹³ Examples include Marvin H. Pope, "The Scene on the Drinking Mug from Ugarit," in *Near Eastern Studies in Honor of William Foxwell Albright*, ed. Hans Goedicke (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1971), 393-405, who connects a scene from a drinking mug with a series of episodes in the Baal cycle (*KTU* 1.4 ii 5-11; iv 8-39); and Jared J. Jackson and Harold H. P. Dressler, "El and the Cup of Blessing," *JAOS* 95/1 (1975): 99-101, who connect a scene on a stela with episodes in Kirta (*KTU* 1.15 ii 16-20) and Aqhatu (*KTU* 1.17 i 34-36). The latter study, and others as well, will be discussed in detail below in the contextual syntheses under the relevant gestures.

¹⁴ For a list of contextual indicators that are included in the analysis, see below.

Greece and Rome.¹⁵ Northwest Semitic art, like the Hebrew Bible and other texts covered in chapters 2 and 3, depicts many ritual situations involving deities and mortals, and it is possible to find some correspondences among the gestures in this culture's literature and art, though uncertainties inevitably remain due to gaps in the data.

In general, studies of ritual gestures involving raising, extending, and clasping hand(s) in Northwest Semitic society have focused either on textual sources or on iconography, and attempts to link these two sources of data have been haphazard and brief. This state of affairs is likely due to the lack of an articulated methodology for linking the two sources of data. For example, Mayer Gruber's influential work on nonverbal communication in the ancient Near East¹⁶ is exclusively based on textual sources and hardly mentions iconography. David Burke's eight-page article on "Gesture" in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* includes some discussion of iconography and seven illustrations of Mesopotamian, Egyptian, and Levantine art pieces that show gestures, but the connections drawn between textual sources and iconography are impressionistic, even arbitrary. In the fourth paragraph of Burke's article, for instance, he lists biblical passages describing the lifting of the hands in prayer (*נָסַף' יָדַיִם*, *נָסַף' kappayim*, and *מו'אל יָדַיִם*) and mentions the stela of Sin-zer-ibni from Nerab as a "visual example of the hand raised in prayer."¹⁷ This stela, which is not illustrated in Burke's article, shows a man standing and lifting his hand to chin level with the palm sideways.¹⁸ Immediately beneath this paragraph, there is a photograph of an ivory box from Hazor on which is depicted a

¹⁵ Cf. Karl Sittl, *Die Gebärden der Griechen und Römer* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1890); Richard Brilliant, *Gesture and Rank in Roman Art: The Use of Gestures to Denote Status in Roman Sculpture and Coinage* (New Haven: Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1963); Gerhard Neumann, *Gesten und Gebärden in der griechischen Kunst* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1965).

¹⁶ Mayer I. Gruber, *Aspects of Nonverbal Communication in the Ancient Near East* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1980). Portions of this book are discussed in sections 2.2.23 and 3.3.2.2 of the present study.

¹⁷ David G. Burke, "Gesture," in *ISBE* 2:450.

¹⁸ *ANEP*, no. 280. Interestingly, Pritchard, in his explanation of this stela (*ibid.*, page 280), writes that Sin-zer-ibni's "right hand is raised in a gesture of prayer." It is possible that Burke's reference to this stela is influenced by Pritchard's explanation.

man kneeling on one knee and lifting both hands with the palms forward; this is described in the caption as “a man with outstretched arms kneeling in prayer.”¹⁹ In neither case does the art object contain any concrete indication of prayer to a deity, nor is there direct evidence for a link between the gestures shown on the objects and the gesture phrases used in the biblical passages. Indeed, the wide difference between the figure on the stela and that on the ivory box, both being cited in connection with the same set of gesture phrases, underscores the arbitrary nature of the connections. These studies by Gruber and Burke are quite typical of the majority of work on Northwest Semitic gestures to date; those who have ventured into textual-iconographic comparisons at all have done so at the expense of academic rigor, apparently taking only intuition as their guide.

The greatest proponent of the merging of Near Eastern texts and iconography is Othmar Keel, who has contributed significant studies on the topic of gestures. A section of Keel’s book *The Symbolism of the Biblical World: Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Book of Psalms* is devoted to “Attitudes of Prayer,” and other parts of the book touch on gestures that are performed in other contexts, such as oath-taking, initiation, and combat.²⁰ Throughout the book, there are illustrations of ancient Near Eastern art with quotes from the biblical Psalms given in the captions. For example, a drawing of a relief from the temple of Seti I at Abydos, which shows king Seti kneeling before the enthroned deity Re-Horakhty and lifting both hands with the palms forward, is accompanied by a caption quoting from Psalm 134:2: “Lift up your hands to the holy place, and bless the LORD!”²¹ Since the gesture phrase in this passage in the Hebrew is

¹⁹ Burke, *ISBE* 2:450.

²⁰ Othmar Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World: Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Book of Psalms* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1997), 308-23 (“Attitudes of Prayer”); also 95-97 (oath-taking); 198-201, 258-59 (initiation); 205-7 (gesture of the seated god ʾIlu); 210-17, 291-97 (combat).

²¹ *Ibid.*, 316. The gesture depicted in this scene may be more than just a visual display; the king’s hands overlap with the door to Re-Harakhty’s shrine, and the caption reads *sfh dbʿt* “loosening the seal.” See Amice M. Calverley,

nṣṣ ' *yodayim*, the caption implicitly links the gesture depicted in the relief with *nṣṣ* ' *yodayim* in the contextual type of prayer. Yet there is no argumentation for this connection; Keel apparently assumes that the reader will see the connection as self-evident. Again, the comparisons of textual and iconographic data in Keel's work are brief, impressionistic, and lack an articulated methodology, though they are useful as a record of one scholar's interpretation of the data. An in-depth examination of this topic using an explicit methodology is therefore needed.

The method followed in this chapter relies heavily on close examination of context.²² When dealing with art objects, we use the word *context* broadly to refer both to the original use and location of the object and to elements that are depicted along with the gesture on the object. We do this because the conceptual dividing line between the real and the depicted context is somewhat fluid, particularly when one considers the similarity between a full-round sculpture in its real context and a two-dimensional representation of a figure in its depicted context. For example, a figurine of a seated god placed in a temple cella may be said to have a context similar to a representation in relief of a god seated behind an altar.

Specifically, seven elements are considered in connection with gestures depicted in art. These elements are listed below, roughly in order of narrowing proximity to the gesture itself:

1. Setting (i.e. the general context in which the object was used, or, in the case of two-dimensional representation, the type of scene represented; e.g. combat, encounter between human and deity)
2. Inscription on the art object

Myrtle F. Broome, and Alan H. Gardiner, *The Temple of King Sethos I at Abydos*, vol. 2 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1935), pl. 14.

²² A precedent for the examination of context in the analysis of gestures in ancient art was set by Michael Wedde, who wrote the following in connection with his analysis of gestures in Minoan glyptic art: "to be understandable, a gesture is above all contextual: it is performed in a specific situation, directed at a precise target, with the aim of having a predetermined desired outcome." Michael Wedde, "Talking Hands: A Study of Minoan and Mycenaean Ritual Gesture: Some Preliminary Notes," in *MELETEMATA: Studies in Aegean Archaeology Presented to Malcolm H. Wiener as He Enters His 65th Year*, ed. Philip B. Betancourt, Vassos Karageorghis, Robert Laffineur, and Wolf-Dietrich Niemeier (Liege: University of Liege, 1999), 3:913.

3. Possible connection to a historical or mythological event known from textual sources
4. Target (i.e. the figure or object to which the gesture is directed or addressed), including identifying attributes, pose, and gesture if the Target is human or human-like
5. Instrument (i.e. an object held in the hand that performs the gesture)
6. Attributes and identity of the Agent (i.e. the one performing the gesture)
7. Details of the gesture itself (e.g. position of the fingers, use with right and/or left hand)

These elements purposely correspond to those examined in the previous two chapters in connection with gestures described in literature.²³ The setting of an art object corresponds roughly to the descriptive setting of a gesture in literature. An inscription accompanying a scene in art may describe actions performed simultaneously with or by means of the gesture, or it may give words spoken by the person performing the gesture; this is similar to parallel words, result and purpose clauses, and direct speech associated with a gesture phrase. The target and instrument depicted in art are equivalent to the Target and Instrument described by means of adverbials in a gesture phrase. The agent of a gesture in art corresponds to the Agent in the contextual analysis of a gesture in literature. Finally, the details of the gesture correspond to what the verb and noun of a basic gesture phrase describe. These correspondences are exploited in the contextual analysis below to establish links between gestures in art and gesture phrases in literature.

It is a common practice to refer to gestures in ancient art using terms that describe the gestures' functions. For example, terms like *adoration gesture*, *prayer gesture*, and *menacing gesture* are often used. Michael Wedde, in a study of gestures in Minoan art, has presented a strong case for avoiding function-terms such as these in the initial stage of research; the use of

²³ The terms *target*, *instrument*, and *agent* are chosen primarily for compatibility with the terms used in chapters 2 and 3. However, our application of these terms to iconography is not entirely novel, as Wedde uses the terms *recipient* and *target* in the same sense as our term *target*. See Michael Wedde, "Talking Hands," 912-13.

these terms, according to Wedde, is prejudicial and hampers objectivity. Instead, he advocates a system of numbering gestures according to the form of the gesture (in the plates of his article, he gives illustrations of twenty-four gestures, numbered as G1 to G24).²⁴ The system used in this chapter for referring to gestures in art follows Wedde in avoiding function-terms and in focusing on the form of the gesture. However, rather than referring to the gestures by number, which would require the reader to carry a heavy burden of recall, we name the gestures based on distinguishing characteristics of their form. For example, the gesture of lifting the hand with the palm facing forward is referred to as Palm Out, while raising the hand with the palm inward is referred to as Palm In.

The order of presentation followed in this chapter is also based on the form of the gesture and is similar to the order followed by Wedde: we present and discuss first gestures performed with one hand, then gestures performed with both hands, then gestures involving contact between participants. For each gesture, we first give a brief introduction to the gesture's use in Northwest Semitic art; then we present examples of objects on which the gesture is depicted, organizing them based on the specific type of scene in which the gesture occurs; finally, we discuss aspects of the context in these scene types, comparing these aspects with those of the gesture phrases discussed in chapters 2 and 3 in order to establish equations between gesture and phrase (where possible).

4.2. Fist Up

The most frequently attested gesture in Northwest Semitic iconography consists of one hand (typically the right) being raised to the level of the head or a little higher, the elbow approximately to the square and the hand making a fist. The upraised hand usually holds a

²⁴ Wedde, "Talking Hands," 913.

weapon or originally held one at the time the artifact was created, although, as we shall see, this is not without exceptions. The gesture is attested on scores of metal figurines found throughout the Levant and dating from the Late Bronze Age (ca. 1550-1200 BCE) through Iron Age I (ca. 1200-1000 BCE), as well as in relief on stone stelae from the Late Bronze Age through Iron Age II (ca. 1000-550 BCE). Carved ivories from this region also show the gesture. Attestations of the gesture in Levantine glyptic art range from cylinder seals of the eighteenth century BCE (the earliest appearance of the gesture in the art of this region) to Iron Age stamp seals. The gesture is most often performed by a male deity in striding pose, though there are a few examples of female deities and humans performing it. Because the combination of the upraised fist and the striding pose are naturally associated with smiting, the male figure in this gesture and pose is typically referred to as the “smiting god,” and the figurines depicting this deity are called “smiting god figurines.” In the present study, we adopt the term *smiting god motif* to refer to the combination of the striding pose and the upraised hand gesture, but we refer to the gesture itself in purely descriptive terms as “Fist Up.”

The smiting god motif in art has its first known antecedents in predynastic Egypt, which has yielded depictions of a king assuming this pose, holding a mace in his upraised right hand and grasping prisoners by the hair with his left. Examples of this include the famous Narmer Palette and the ivory plaque of king Den.²⁵ This iconography of the king in smiting pose continues in Egyptian art in every major period of its history until Greco-Roman times.²⁶ Traces of the same or a similar motif also appear in Mesopotamia during the Early Dynastic period and the Dynasty of Akkad, though the evidence does not point to a consistent use of the motif in

²⁵ ANEP nos. 293, 296.

²⁶ See ANEP, nos. 291, 295, 312; Keel, *Symbolism of the Biblical World*, 291-99; Richard H. Wilkinson, *Symbol and Magic in Egyptian Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1994), 176-77, 188. A complete account of this motif in ancient Egypt is not undertaken here, as this would take the present study far beyond its proper scope.

Mesopotamia during these early periods. The motif apparently spread from Egypt to Syria and Anatolia, and then to southern Mesopotamia, via glyptic art during the eighteenth century BCE.²⁷ In the latter three regions, the motif was associated with the storm god (Hadad/Adad/Ba‘lu in Syria and Mesopotamia, Teshub in Anatolia). This transfer of the motif led to the addition of some distinctive iconographic features, such as the storm god’s horned helmet and lightning weapon.²⁸ Also, the cowering captives that are the target of the smiting in the Egyptian representations are not always present in the Asiatic versions of the motif.²⁹ During the Late Bronze Age, this motif, now specifically in association with the god Rashap, was re-imported from the Levant to Egypt. Evidence for this is found on Egyptian stelae depicting Rashap in this pose; the Semitic name of the deity appears in hieroglyphic captions on the stelae, and other aspects of West Semitic influence are visible in the iconography.³⁰ The smiting god motif also

²⁷ Here we refer exclusively to the transfer of the smiting god figure as an artistic motif traceable in the archaeological record, the motif being coupled with certain stylistic elements that can be transferred along a temporal and spatial trajectory. By contrast, we assume that the real-life action of holding a weapon over the head, and perhaps also the mental image of a figure frozen in this pose, are practically universal and not susceptible to being traced. Further, the action with which the motif was iconically associated may have had different significance from one culture to the next.

²⁸ Henri Frankfort, *Cylinder Seals: A Documentary Essay on the Art and Religion of the Ancient Near East* (London: Macmillan, 1939), 124-27, 162-64; Robert Houston Smith, “Near Eastern Forerunners of the Striding Zeus,” *Archaeology* 15 (1962): 177-80; Dominique Collon, “The Smiting God: A Study of a Bronze in the Pomerance Collection in New York,” *Levant* 4 (1972): 130; Dominique Collon, *First Impressions: Cylinder Seals in the Ancient Near East* (London: British Museum, 1987), 55; Clelia Mora, *La glittica anatolica del II millennio A.C.: Classificazione tipologica, I. I sigilli a iscrizione geroglifica* (Pavia: Gianni Luculano, 1987), pt. 1, 219-46, and pt. 2, pls. 59-68. The development of the lightning weapon can be traced from Sargonid cylinder seals that show the storm god, standing atop a winged monster or a chariot pulled by the monster, wielding a whip in his upraised hand (Frankfort, *Cylinder Seals*, 124-25, pl. 22a, e). Later, some styles show the deity wielding a forked lightning weapon in one or both hands. In the Levantine styles that comprise our corpus, the forked lightning weapon occurs exclusively on cylinder seals and only in the lowered hand; in some cases, it is replaced by a spear that has characteristics reminiscent of lightning (cf. the “Baal au foudre” stela, Louvre AO 15.775, discussed below). The most common weapon in the raised hand in Levantine art is the mace (see below), which may have some connection with thunder, in contrast to the sharp projectile weapon symbolic of lightning; see Keel, *Symbolism of the Biblical World*, 212.

²⁹ Smith, “Near Eastern Forerunners,” 180; Collon, “Smiting God,” 130. As will be shown below, cowering captives are, in fact, shown quite often (though not as an obligatory feature) in the Levantine version of the motif. A single captive, sometimes shown trodden underfoot rather than upright, is also present in some Old Babylonian cylinder seals; see Frankfort, *Cylinder Seals*, pl. 28a, c, d, g.

³⁰ Jozef M. A. Janssen, “Une stèle du dieu Reshef à Cambridge,” *Chronique d’Égypte* 50 (1950): 209-12; William Kelly Simpson, “An Egyptian Statuette of a Phoenician God,” *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 10 (1952): 184-86; ANEP, no. 476; Helga Seeden, *The Standing Armed Figurines in the Levant* (München: C. H. Beck’sche

spread from the Levant to the Aegean world in the Late Bronze Age in the form of metal figurines; the motif was perpetuated in Greek and Etruscan art in the iconography of Zeus, Herakles, Mars, and Minerva.³¹

4.2.1. Metal Figurines Showing the Smiting God Motif

Levantine sites yielding well-preserved examples of metal smiting god figurines found in controlled excavations include Ugarit, Byblos, Kamid el-Loz, Tell Fray, Tell Kazel, Tell el-Judeideh, Megiddo, Gezer, and Atlit. These consist of about thirty figurines dating from the middle of the second millennium BCE to about 1000 BCE. In addition, many figurines of the same type found in Cyprus, Crete, the Aegean, and Sicily are thought to be Levantine exports or at least of Levantine inspiration.³² This larger group falls within a span of about one thousand years, from the middle of the second millennium BCE to the middle of the first millennium, those of western Mediterranean provenance accounting for the majority of first-millennium examples.³³ The total number of published smiting god figurines, including those acquired by purchase but excluding those strongly suspected of being forgeries, is 177.³⁴

Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1980), 145 and pl. 137; Emily Teeter, *Ancient Egypt: Treasures from the Collection of the Oriental Institute* (Chicago: Oriental Institute, 2003), 60. Aspects of West Semitic influence on the Egyptian Rashap stelae include elements of the deity's dress, ornamentation, and weaponry, such as the tassels on his kilt, the gazelle head on his headdress in place of a uraeus, his pointed beard, and his battle axe.

³¹ Smith, "Near Eastern Forerunners," 180-83; Seeden, *Standing Armed Figurines*, 122, 125-29; Otto J. Brendel, *Etruscan Art* (New York: Penguin, 1978), 310-14, 328; Roland Hampe and Erika Simon, *Griechische Sagen in der frühen etruskischen Kunst* (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1964), 11-17 and pls. 6, 20-21. In view of the evidence put forward in these sources, it is surprising to find the following in Crowley, *The Aegean and the East*, 122: "The purpose of this brief survey of the Smiting Figure motif is to point out its long established widespread use in both great eastern traditions [i.e. Egypt and Mesopotamia], in one to depict the great king, in the other to portray a mighty god. However no grand personage or god of the Aegean world is ever rendered in such a manner." The latter statement is certainly incorrect, for the smiting god motif is commonly known in the Aegean world and is clearly connected, at least in some examples, with deities such as Zeus.

³² Seeden, *Standing Armed Figurines*, 122.

³³ A convenient chronological chart is found in Seeden, *Standing Armed Figurines*, pl. 139.

³⁴ The major publications of these figurines are Collon, "Smiting God"; Ora Negbi, *Canaanite Gods in Metal: An Archaeological Study of Ancient Syro-Palestinian Figurines* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv Institute of Archaeology, 1976); Seeden, *Standing Armed Figurines*. The latter is the most comprehensive.

To illustrate this type of figurine, an example (Louvre AO 11598) from the Late Bronze Age port of Minet el-Beida (near Ugarit) is shown in figure 1.³⁵

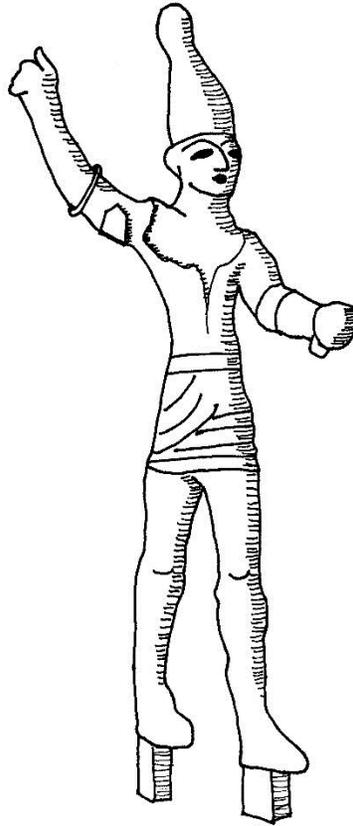


Figure 1. Figurine of a deity in smiting pose, from Minet el-Beida.
Drawn by the author after Schaeffer, *Syria* 10 (1929), pl. 53.

This example is of bronze, as are almost all of the other known examples (a few are of silver), but this one is rare in that some of the silver plating and gold foil which originally covered it is still preserved and visible. The headdress of this figure resembles the White Crown associated with Upper Egypt in Egyptian iconography. The upraised hand is perforated, but only part of a

³⁵ Claude F.-A. Schaeffer, “Les fouilles de Minet-el-Beida et de Ras Shamra (campagne du printemps 1929), rapport sommaire,” *Syria* 10 (1929): 288 and pl. 53; *ANEP*, no. 481; Negbi, *Canaanite Gods in Metal*, no. 1318; Seeden, *Standing Armed Figurines*, no. 1693; André Caquot and Maurice Sznycer, *Ugaritic Religion* (Leiden: Brill, 1980), 24 and pl. 9d; Agnès Spycket, *La statuaire du proche-orient ancien* (Leiden: Brill, 1981), 338n204, pl. 220; Geneviève Galliano and Yves Calvet, *Le royaume d’Ougarit: Aux origines de l’alphabet* (Paris: Somogy, 2004), 262 (no. 305).

weapon shaft stuck through the hole survives, and the left fist is filled with the remnant of another weapon.

Data for the other examples of smiting god figurines are summarized in the following list. The entries in the list are presented in alphabetical order of museum and number (NN = No [Museum] Number, PLU = Present Location Unknown). These references by museum and number are also employed to refer to these objects in the discussion below. Each entry in the list begins with a short remark about the period and provenance (P = Purchased on the antiquities market, either by a collector or by the museum, or for sale when published). Then a description of the object is given, focusing on those characteristics that are critical for the analysis of the gesture and its context: the gender of the figure, positions of the hands (R = Right hand, L = Left hand), objects held in the hands, and the presence of tangs or means of suspension. For the many cases in which no object was found in the upraised right hand, information on the perforation of the fist is included if such information is available; where neither an object nor the perforation of the hand is mentioned, it may be assumed that information about the latter is unavailable due to a poor state of preservation or insufficient published data. Finally, references to the main publications are given.

- | | |
|-----------------|--|
| ABSA B 144 | Unknown provenance / male with conical headdress, R in Fist Up , L forward, no tangs / Seeden, no. 1818. |
| Aleppo RS 4.511 | LB Ugarit / male with conical headdress, R in Fist Up , L forward, feet missing / Seeden, no. 1702. |
| Aleppo RS 4.525 | LB Ugarit / male with conical headdress, R in Fist Up with perforated fist , L forward, tangs under feet / Collon, "Smiting God," fig. 1, no. 8; Negbi, no. 1323; Seeden, no. 1703. |
| Aleppo RS 8.?? | LB Ugarit / male with White Crown, R in Fist Up with perforated fist , L forward, tangs under feet / Collon, "Smiting God," fig. 1, no. 6; Negbi, no. 1322; Seeden, no. 1698. |

- Aleppo RS 34.208 LB Ugarit / male with conical headdress, **R in Fist Up with perforated fist**, L forward, tangs under feet / Seeden, no. 1695.
- Aleppo NN Tell Fray / male with flat horned headdress, **R in Fist Up with remnant of weapon shaft**, L forward with remnant of weapon shaft, tangs under feet / Seeden, no. 1760.
- Ankara 8825 LB Tokat or Dövklek, Turkey / male with horned conical headdress, **R in Fist Up with remnant of weapon shaft**, L forward with remnant of weapon shaft, tangs under feet / Akurgal, *Art of the Hittites*, 108 and pl. 44; Collon, "Smiting God," fig. 5, no. 4; Negbi, no. 1397; Seeden, no. 1828.
- Ashmolean 1886.1080 P, "Sidon" / male with short conical headdress, **R in Fist Up with perforated fist (arm bent forward)**, L forward, tangs under feet joined / Negbi, no. 1372; Seeden, no. 1775.
- Ashmolean 1889.777 P, "Beirut" / male with conical headdress, **R in Fist Up with perforated fist**, L forward, single large tang under feet / Negbi, no. 1373; Seeden, no. 1777.
- Ashmolean 1890.592 P, "Beirut" / male with long pointed headdress, **R in Fist Up with perforated fist**, L forward, tangs under feet joined / Collon, "Smiting God," fig. 3, no. 28; Negbi, no. 1374; Seeden, no. 1776.
- Ashmolean AE 13.1894.140 Patso, Crete / male with conical headdress, **R in Fist Up with hand missing**, L missing, tangs under feet / Collon, "Smiting God," fig. 7, no. 3; Negbi, no. 1406; Seeden, no. 1809.
- Ashmolean AE 410 Nezero, Greece / male with broken headdress, **L in Fist Up with hand missing**, L forward with hand missing, feet missing / Collon, "Smiting God," fig. 7, no. 9; Negbi, no. 1410; Seeden, no. 1808S.
- Athens 1582 LB Tiryns / male with knobbed conical headdress, **R in Fist Up with perforated fist**, L forward, tangs under feet / Collon, "Smiting God," fig. 7, no. 12; Negbi, no. 1407; Seeden, no. 1816.
- Athens 6433 LB Mycenae / male with knobbed conical headdress, **R in Fist Up with perforated fist**, L forward, tangs under feet / Collon, "Smiting God," fig. 7, no. 11; Negbi, no. 1408; Seeden, no. 1817.
- Athens 14494 Iron II Thermon, Greece / male with conical headdress, **R in Fist Up with wire (either bent weapon shaft or ring for suspension)**, L forward with hand missing, tangs under feet / Collon, "Smiting God," fig. 7, no. 10; Negbi, no. 1409; Seeden, no. 1821.
- Athens 14926 Iron II Sounion, Greece / male with conical headdress, **R in Fist Up with hand curled**, L forward, loop on back, no tangs / Seeden, no. 1819.
- AUB 57.23 P, Unknown provenance / male with conical headdress, **R in Fist Up with hand missing**, L forward, remnant of tang under feet / Seeden, no. 1711.

- AUB 2544 P, Biqua' / male with conical headdress, **R in Fist Up with unperforated fist**, L forward, tangs under feet / Seeden, no. 1744F.³⁶
- AUB 2617 P, Syria / male with multi-horned conical headdress, **R in Fist Up with perforated fist**, L missing, tangs under feet / Collon, "Smiting God," fig. 8, no. 3; Negbi, no. 1387; Seeden, no. 1709.
- AUB 3138 P, "Phoenicia" / male with conical headdress, **R in Fist Up with perforated fist**, L forward, traces of tangs under feet / Seeden, no. 1746.
- Beirut 1388 P, "Biqua', Lebanon" / male with conical headdress, **R in Fist Up with curled fist**, L forward, loop attached to headdress, one thick tang under feet / Seeden, no. 1781.
- Beirut B 74/2 LB Byblos / male with White Crown, **R in Fist Up**, L forward, tangs under feet / Collon, "Smiting God," fig. 2, no. 13; Negbi, no. 1338; Seeden, no. 1660.
- Beirut B 2031 LB Byblos / male with conical headdress, **R in Fist Up with remnant of weapon shaft**, L missing, tang under right foot, left foot missing / Negbi, no. 1334; Seeden, no. 1649.
- Beirut B 6895 LB Byblos / male with knobbed conical headdress, **R in Fist Up with remnant of weapon shaft**, L forward, feet missing / Collon, "Smiting God," fig. 2, no. 14; Negbi, no. 1336; Seeden, no. 1665.
- Beirut B 7635 LB Byblos / male with White Crown, **R in Fist Up with remnant of weapon shaft**, L forward, tangs under feet / Negbi, no. 1335; Seeden, no. 1662.
- Beirut B 7638 LB Byblos / male with conical headdress, **R in Fist Up with hand missing**, L forward, remnant of tang under right foot, left foot missing / Seeden, no. 1663.
- Beirut B 7646 LB Byblos / male with White Crown, **R in Fist Up with hand missing**, L forward with hand missing, feet missing / Seeden, no. 1652.
- Beirut B 11.864 LB Byblos / male with conical headdress, **R in Fist Up with hand missing**, L missing, feet missing / Seeden, no. 1656.
- Beirut B 11.881 LB Byblos / male with White Crown, **R in Fist Up with hand missing**, L forward, feet missing / Negbi, no. 1353; Seeden, no. 1666.
- Beirut B 11.896 LB Byblos / male with conical headdress, **R in Fist Up with hand missing**, L forward with remnant of weapon shaft, tang under right foot, left foot missing / Negbi, no. 1348; Seeden, no. 1669.

³⁶ Seeden classifies this piece as a forgery (hence the "F" in the reference), but the only reason she gives for this decision is the lack of perforation in the fists: "Fists covered by thumbs and without any visible traces of perforations or weapon shafts suggest that the figurine is a recent fabrication" (Seeden, 114). It is argued below that the lack of perforation is normal and that many examples of the smiting god motif were never intended to have a weapon in the upraised hand, contrary to what Seeden assumes.

- Beirut B 11.899 LB Byblos / male with conical headdress, **R in Fist Up**, L forward with remnant of weapon shaft, tangs under feet / Seeden, no. 1675.
- Beirut B 11.904 LB Byblos / male with conical headdress, **R in Fist Up with remnant of weapon shaft**, L forward with remnant of weapon shaft, tangs under feet / Seeden, no. 1672.
- Beirut B 11.905 LB Byblos / male with conical headdress, **R in Fist Up**, L missing, tangs under feet / Negbi, no. 1339; Seeden, no. 1648.
- Beirut B 11.920 LB Byblos / male with conical headdress, **R in Fist Up with perforated fist**, L forward, feet missing / Negbi, no. 1349; Seeden, no. 1651.
- Beirut B 11.921 LB Byblos / female with conical headdress, **R in Fist Up with hand missing but long weapon shaft remaining**, L forward with hand missing, feet missing / Negbi, no. 1344; Seeden, no. 1681.
- Beirut B 12.670 LB Byblos / male with head missing, **R in Fist Up with hand missing**, L missing, feet missing / Seeden, no. 1664.
- Beirut B 12.678 LB Byblos / male with White Crown, **R in Fist Up**, L forward, feet missing / Negbi, no. 1342; Seeden, no. 1658.
- Beirut B 12.679 LB Byblos / female with pointed headdress, **R in Fist Up with hand missing**, L missing, tangs under feet / Negbi, no. 1624; Seeden, no. 1682.
- Beirut B 12.684 LB Byblos / male with conical headdress, **R in Fist Up with hand missing**, L forward, tang under right foot, left foot missing / Negbi, no. 1343; Seeden, no. 1670.
- Beirut B 12.705 LB Byblos / male with White Crown, **R in Fist Up with hand missing**, L missing, feet missing / Negbi, no. 1352; Seeden, no. 1657.
- Beirut B 12.707 LB Byblos / male with conical headdress, **R in Fist Up**, L forward with remnant of weapon shaft, tangs under feet / Collon, "Smiting God," fig. 2, no. 12; Negbi, no. 1424; Seeden, no. 1673.
- Beirut B 12.714 LB Byblos / male with White Crown, **R in Fist Up**, L forward, tang under right foot, left foot missing / Negbi, no. 1340; Seeden, no. 1667.
- Beirut B 12.720 LB Byblos / male with conical headdress, **R in Fist Up with hand missing**, L missing, tangs under feet / Seeden, no. 1671.
- Beirut B 14.125 LB Byblos / male with head missing, **R in Fist Up with hand missing**, L forward, tangs under feet / Negbi, no. 1425; Seeden, no. 1654.
- Beirut B 14.126 LB Byblos / male with White Crown, **R in Fist Up with perforated fist**, L forward, tangs under feet joined with header / Negbi, no. 1345; Seeden, no. 1653.
- Beirut B 14.335 LB Byblos / male with conical headdress, **R in Fist Up with hand missing**, L missing, feet missing / Negbi, no. 1341; Seeden, no. 1655.

- Beirut B 17.535 LB Byblos / male with conical headdress, **R in Fist Up with arm bent forward**,³⁷ L forward with perforated fist, tangs under feet / Negbi, no. 1351; Seeden, no. 1677.
- Beirut B 17.537 LB Byblos / male with White Crown, **R in Fist Up with hand missing**, L missing, feet missing / Negbi, no. 1346; Seeden, no. 1659.
- Beirut B 17.690 LB Byblos / male with pointed headdress, **R in Fist Up with hand missing**, L missing, feet missing / Seeden, no. 1676.
- Beirut KL 68.500 LB Kamid el-Loz, Lebanon / male with White Crown, **R in Fist Up with perforated fist**, L forward, tangs under feet / Negbi, no. 1355; Seeden, no. 1731.
- Beirut KL 69.234 LB Kamid el-Loz, Lebanon / male with White Crown, **R in Fist Up with perforated fist**, L forward, tangs under feet / Seeden, no. 1729.
- Beirut KL 70.507 LB Kamid el-Loz, Lebanon / male with White Crown, **R in Fist Up**, L forward, tangs under feet / Seeden, no. 1730.
- Beirut KL 70.508 LB Kamid el-Loz, Lebanon / male with conical headdress, **R in Fist Up with unperforated fist**, L forward, tangs under feet / Seeden, no. 1732.
- Beirut KL 70.847 LB Kamid el-Loz, Lebanon / female with *atef* crown, **R in Fist Up with perforated fist**, L forward with perforated fist, loop on back of neck, tangs under feet / Seeden, no. 1728.
- Beirut NN (1) Bīqā', Lebanon / female with horned conical headdress, **R in Fist Up with perforated fist**, L forward with perforated fist, tangs under feet / Seeden, no. 1723.
- Beirut NN (2) LB Byblos / male with White Crown, **R in Fist Up with hand missing**, L forward, existence of tangs not certain / Seeden, no. 1668.
- Beirut NN (3) P, Lebanon / male with flattened conical headdress, **R in Fist Up with hand missing**, L forward, existence of tangs uncertain / Seeden, no. 1758.
- Beirut NN (4) Syria / male with White Crown, **R in Fist Up**, L forward, tangs under feet / Collon, "Smiting God," fig. 4, no. 31; Negbi, no. 1309; Seeden, no. 1733.
- Berlin Äg 12621 P, Egypt / male with elaborate headdress, **R in Fist Up with perforated fist**, L forward with hand missing, tang under right foot, left foot missing / Collon, "Smiting God," fig. 7, no. 6; Seeden, no. 1718.
- BIFA NN Tortosa, Spain / male, **L in Fist Up**, R forward, feet on base without tang / Negbi, no. 1377.
- BM 20727 Tortosa, Spain / male with pointed headdress, **R in Fist Up with unperforated fist**, L forward with unperforated fist, base with single tang under feet / Negbi, no. 1376.

³⁷ The position of the arm resembles Palm Out (see below). However, both Negbi and Seeden deal with this figurine in the context of others of the smiting god type. The Palm Out gesture is not otherwise attested on full-round figurines, while some other examples of the smiting god motif do show the raised arm somewhat forward, as if the arm is being lowered in the act of smiting (see Avigad, *Corpus*, nos. 320, 1098).

- BM 25096 P, “Tyre” / male with tall Egyptianizing headdress, **R in Fist Up with perforated fist**, L forward with perforated fist, feet missing / *ANEP*, no. 484; Collon, “Smiting God,” fig. 4, no. 29; Negbi, no. 1354; Seeden, no. 1715.
- BM 48452 P, North Syria / male with conical headdress, **R in Fist Up with perforated fist**, L forward with perforated fist, right foot missing, no tang under left foot / Collon, “Smiting God,” fig. 3, no. 26; Negbi, no. 1391.
- BM 130714 P, Unknown provenance / male with knobbed conical headdress, **R in Fist Up with perforated fist**, L forward with perforated fist, feet on base with no tang / Negbi, no. 1312; Seeden, no. 1771.
- BM 134627 P, Unknown provenance / male with pointed headdress, **R in Fist Up with remnant of weapon shaft**, L forward with hand missing, feet missing / Seeden, no. 1707.
- BSMV Präh IV c 85 P, “Attica” / male with short rounded headdress, **R in Fist Up**, L forward, tangs under feet / Seeden, no. 1820.
- Berlin VA 2968 P, Syria / male with White Crown, **R in Fist Up**, L missing, loop in front of belt, tangs under feet / Collon, “Smiting God,” fig. 5, no. 9; Negbi, no. 1315; Seeden, no. 1713.
- CAntik 7319 P, Unknown provenance / male with White Crown, **R in Fist Up with perforated fist**, L forward with perforated fist, tangs under feet joined to header / Negbi, no. 1357; Seeden, no. 1742.
- CNCG 1018 P, “North Syria” / male with flattened conical headdress, **R in Fist Up with perforated fist**, L forward with perforated fist, feet missing / Seeden, no. 1774.
- CNCG NN P, “Syria” / male with conical headdress, **R in Fist Up with curled fist**, L missing, tangs under feet / Seeden, no. 1772.
- Damascus RS 18.204 LB Ugarit / male with White Crown, **R in Fist Up with perforated fist**, L forward with perforated fist, tangs under feet joined / Seeden, no. 1688.
- Damascus RS 21.120 LB Ugarit / male with short pointed headdress, **R in Fist Up with unperforated fist**,³⁸ L forward, tangs under feet / Seeden, no. 1705.
- Damascus RS 22.09 LB Ugarit / male with short pointed headdress, **R in Fist Up with unperforated fist**, L forward, tangs under feet / Seeden, no. 1704.
- Damascus RS 23.370 LB Ugarit / Silver figurine, male with rounded headdress, **R in Fist Up with perforated fist**, L forward with perforated fist, feet on small cones connected to a single base³⁹ / Seeden, no. 1692S.

³⁸ There is a discrepancy between Seeden’s description of the object as having “arms with flattened and rolled spatula ends” (Seeden, 105) and her drawing of the object.

³⁹ The two small cones perhaps represent mountains like those on which Baal strides in relief and glyptic art. For the latter, cf. Pierre Bordreuil, “Recherches ougaritiques, I: Où Baal a-t-il remporté la victoire contre Yam?” *Semitica* 40 (1991): 21-23.

- Damascus RS
23.392 LB Ugarit / male with White Crown, **R in Fist Up with perforated fist**, L forward with perforated fist, existence of tangs uncertain / *ANESTP*, no. 827; Collon, “Smiting God,” fig. 1, no. 9; Negbi, no. 1327; Seeden, no. 1689; Caquot and Szynger, *UR*, pl. 9a.
- Damascus RS
23.393 LB Ugarit / male with White Crown, **R in Fist Up with perforated fist**, L forward with perforated fist, existence of tangs uncertain / *ANESTP*, no. 827; Collon, “Smiting God,” fig. 1, no. 9; Negbi, no. 1328; Seeden, no. 1690; Caquot and Szynger, *UR*, pl. 9a.
- Damascus S.O.
112 Syria / male with pointed headdress, **R in Fist Up with sword**, L forward with bow, single tang under feet / Negbi, no. 1385; Seeden, no. 1750.
- Damascus S.O.
201 P, Syria / male with *atef* crown, **R in Fist Up with hand missing**, L missing, feet missing / Seeden, no. 1789.
- Damascus S.O.
1144 LB Tell Kazel / male with flattened conical headdress, **R in Fist Up with curled fist**, L forward, tangs under feet / Seeden, no. 1706.
- Delos B 7175 LB Delos / male with knobbed conical headdress, **R in Fist Up with sickle sword**, L forward with shield, tang under left foot, right foot missing / Collon, “Smiting God,” fig. 7, no. 4; Negbi, no. 1411; Seeden, no. 1813.
- Harvard NN Syria / male, **R in Fist Up**, L forward, no tangs / Negbi, no. 1310.
- Hildesheim 46 Egypt / male with White Crown, **R in Fist Up with perforated fist**, L forward with perforated fist, tangs under feet / *AOB*, no. 347; Collon, “Smiting God,” fig. 7, no. 5; Seeden, no. 1717.
- IAA NN Fields near Tel Dan / female without headdress, **R in Fist Up with perforated fist**, L forward, feet on base without tang / Negbi, no. 1627; Seeden, no. 1721.
- Istanbul NN (1) LB Gezer / male with flattened conical headdress, **R in Fist Up**, L forward, remnants of tangs under feet / Collon, “Smiting God,” fig. 2, no. 19; Negbi, no. 1366; Seeden, no. 1763.
- Istanbul NN (2) LB Gezer / male with headdress (damaged), **R in Fist Up with perforated fist**, L forward, tangs under feet / Negbi, no. 1364; Seeden, no. 1762.
- Istanbul NN (3) LB Gezer / male with flattened conical headdress, **R in Fist Up with remnant of shaft (but no room between fist and head)**, L forward with staff, tangs under feet / Negbi, no. 1365; Seeden, no. 1764.
- Königsberg
VII.9783 Šernai, Lithuania / male with flattened conical headdress, **R in Fist Up with perforated fist**, L forward and across chest with perforated fist, tangs under feet / Collon, “Smiting God,” fig. 7, no. 13; Negbi, no. 1413; Seeden, no. 1822.
- LACMA M
45.3.121 P, “Palestine” / male with White Crown, **R in Fist Up with perforated fist**, L forward, tangs under feet / Collon, “Smiting God,” fig. 8, no. 4; Negbi, no. 1307; Seeden, no. 1716.

- Louvre AO 1327 Arsos, Cyprus / male with conical headdress, **R in Fist Up with perforated fist**, L forward but mostly missing, feet missing / Negbi, no. 1402; Seeden, no. 1800.
- Louvre AO 1464 P, Tortosa, Spain / male with pointed headdress, **R in Fist Up**, L forward, existence of tangs not certain / Collon, "Smiting God," fig. 3, no. 22; Negbi, no. 1378.
- Louvre AO 2054 P, Lebanon / male, **R in Fist Up**, L forward, tangs under feet / Negbi, no. 1356.
- Louvre AO 2212 P, "Northern Phoenicia" / male with flat-topped conical headdress, **R in Fist Up with remnant of shaft (but no room between fist and head)**, L missing, existence of tangs not certain / Collon, "Smiting God," fig. 3, no. 24; Negbi, no. 1314; Seeden, no. 1757.
- Louvre AO 2247 North Syria / male with horned headdress, **R in Fist Up with perforated fist**, L forward with hand missing, existence of tangs uncertain / Negbi, no. 1393.
- Louvre AO 2792 P, "Anatolia or North Syria" / male with conical headdress, **R in Fist Up with perforated fist**, L forward with perforated fist, tangs under feet / Negbi, no. 1395; Seeden, no. 1829.
- Louvre AO 3276 Hauran, Syria / female with flat headdress, **R in Fist Up**, L forward with hand missing, standing on pair of lions with pedestal or wide tang underneath / Negbi, no. 1629.
- Louvre AO 3889 P, Near Beirut / female with plumed headdress, **R probably in Fist Up but mostly missing**, L forward with hand missing, feet missing, body bent backward / Negbi, no. 1625; Seeden, no. 1778.
- Louvre AO 3932 P, Syria / male with very elaborate horned headdress, **R in Fist Up with perforated fist**, L forward but mostly missing, feet missing / Collon, "Smiting God," fig. 4, no. 32; Negbi, no. 1429; Seeden, no. 1791.
- Louvre AO 4049 Near Qal'at Faqra, Lebanon / female with *atef* crown flanked by uraei, **R in Fist Up with perforated fist**, L forward with perforated fist,⁴⁰ tangs under feet / Negbi, no. 1626; Seeden, no. 1722; Spycket, *Statuaire*, 427n354, pl. 278.
- Louvre AO 6556 P, Syria / male with conical headdress, **R in Fist Up with perforated fist**, L forward with perforated fist, tangs under feet / Negbi, no. 1382; Seeden, no. 1753.
- Louvre AO 7529 P, Tortosa, Spain / male with pointed headdress, **R in Fist Up with hand missing**, L forward with hand missing, feet missing / Collon, "Smiting God," fig. 3, no. 23; Negbi, no. 1380.

⁴⁰ Seeden compares an engraved axe head that appears to show the same goddess; the comparison would suggest that the figurine held the same items as the goddess in the engraving, namely a curved dagger in the upraised right hand and a mirror in the left (Seeden, 109 and pl. 131). However, Seeden may be overstating the case when she asserts, on this basis alone, that the weapons of the figurine "have to be completed" as in the engraving (*ibid.*).

- Louvre AO 10847 Near Hama / male with horns, **R in Fist Up**, L forward, existence of tangs not certain / Negbi, no. 1427.
- Louvre AO 11188 Tortosa, Spain / male with long pointed headdress, **R in Fist Up**, L forward, existence of tangs not certain / Collon, "Smiting God," fig. 3, no. 21; Negbi, no. 1379; Spycket, *Statuaire*, 340n218, pl. 222.
- Louvre AO 11189 Kara Sheir / male with short rounded headdress, **R in Fist Up with perforated fist**, L forward with perforated fist, short sword in scabbard at hip, tangs under feet / Collon, "Smiting God," fig. 5, no. 5; Negbi, no. 1396; Seeden, no. 1830.
- Louvre AO 17236 LB Ugarit / male with White Crown, **R in Fist Up with unperforated fist**, L forward with unperforated fist, tangs under feet / Negbi, no. 1329; Seeden, no. 1701.
- Louvre AO 17328 LB Ugarit / male with White Crown, **R in Fist Up with flattened fist**, L forward with curled fist, tangs under feet / Collon, "Smiting God," fig. 1, no. 3; Negbi, no. 1325 = 1330; Seeden, no. 1699; Caquot and Sznycer, *UR*, pl. 8c.
- Louvre AO 17329 LB Ugarit / male with White Crown, **R in Fist Up with perforated fist**, L forward with perforated fist, tangs under feet / Collon, "Smiting God," fig. 1, no. 1; Negbi, no. 1326; Seeden, no. 1686.
- Louvre AO 17330 LB Ugarit / male with flat-topped conical headdress, **R in Fist Up with flattened fist**, L forward, tangs under feet / Negbi, no. 1331; Seeden, no. 1700.
- Louvre AO 18511 LB Ugarit / male with horned headdress, **R in Fist Up with perforated fist**, L forward with perforated fist, existence of tangs uncertain / Collon, "Smiting God," fig. 1, no. 5; Negbi, no. 1319; Seeden, no. 1694; Caquot and Sznycer, *UR*, pl. 9c; Spycket, *Statuaire*, 337n200, 345, pl. 219.
- Louvre AO 18517 LB Ugarit / male with White Crown, **R in Fist Up with perforated fist**, L forward with perforated fist, existence of tang under right foot uncertain, left foot missing / Collon, "Smiting God," fig. 1, no. 4; Negbi, no. 1320; Seeden, no. 1687.
- Louvre AO 19094 (1) LB Ugarit / male with *atef* crown, **R in Fist Up**, L forward, tangs under feet / Collon, "Smiting God," fig. 1, no. 7; Negbi, no. 1321; Seeden, no. 1696; Caquot and Sznycer, *UR*, pl. 9b.
- Louvre AO 19094 (2) LB Ugarit / male with ridged headdress, **R in Fist Up with perforated fist**, L forward with perforated fist, tangs under feet / Collon, "Smiting God," fig. 1, no. 2; Negbi, no. 1324; Seeden, no. 1697.
- Louvre AO 19268 LB Ugarit / male with White Crown-like headdress, **R in Fist Up with perforated fist**, L forward with perforated fist, tangs under feet / Negbi, no. 1332; Seeden, no. 1691.

- Louvre AO 20160 P, Syria / female with three-horned headdress, **R in Fist Up with double-bladed battle axe**, L forward with dagger, short sword in scabbard at hip, long tang protruding from back, single tang under feet / Collon, "Smiting God," fig. 4, no. 34; Negbi, no. 1317; Seeden, no. 1724; Spycket, *Statuaire*, 345n246, pl. 226.
- Louvre AO 20205 Syria / male with knobbed conical headdress, **R in Fist Up with perforated fist**, L forward with shield, short sword in scabbard at hip, tangs under feet / Negbi, no. 1311; Seeden, no. 1812.
- Louvre AO 20285 Syria / male with crested headdress, **R in Fist Up**, L missing, tangs under feet / Negbi, no. 1388; Spycket, *Statuaire*, 323n139, pl. 213.
- Louvre AO 21062 LB Qadesh / male with conical headdress, **R in Fist Up**, L forward with flat hand, feet missing / Negbi, no. 1383; Seeden, no. 1754.
- Louvre AO 21100 P, Syria / male with White Crown, **R in Fist Up with perforated fist**, L forward with hand missing, existence of tangs not certain / Negbi, no. 1313; Seeden, no. 1752.
- Louvre AO 22265 P, "Tartus, Syria" / female with *atef* crown,⁴¹ **R in Fist Up with perforated fist**, L forward, base with tang (shared by smaller figure) mounted on chariot / Negbi, no. 22; Seeden, no. 1725; Spycket, *Statuaire*, 428-29, 428n357, pl. 280.
- Louvre AO 22266 P, Syria / male with eight-horned headdress (three pairs of horns modeled on headdress, one pair inserted to the side), **R in Fist Up**, L forward, no tangs / Collon, "Smiting God," fig. 4, no. 33; Negbi, no. 1390; Spycket, *Statuaire*, 340n215, pl. 221.
- Louvre N 3443 P, "near Ankara, Turkey" / male with short pointed headdress, **R in Fist Up with perforated fist**, L forward with perforated fist, standing on animal / Collon, "Smiting God," fig. 5, no. 10; Seeden, no. 1784.
- Melos NN (1) LB Phylakopi / male with conical headdress, **R in Fist Up with perforated fist**, L forward, tangs under feet joined / Seeden, no. 1814.
- Melos NN (2) LB Phylakopi / male with round-topped headdress, **R in Fist Up with mace**, L forward, base with tangs under feet / Seeden, no. 1815.
- MMA 1986.42 P, LB Levant / male with *atef* crown, **R in Fist Up**, L forward, existence of tangs uncertain / <http://www.metmuseum.org/Collections/search-the-collections/30005916?rpp=20&pg=1&ft=Egyptian&pos=2>, accessed 16 Jul 2012.
- MMA 1987.219 P, LB Levant / male with horned conical headdress, **R in Fist Up with remnant of weapon shaft**, L forward with perforated fist, existence of tangs uncertain / <http://www.metmuseum.org/collections/search-the-collections/30006004>, accessed 16 Jul 2012.

⁴¹ This figurine is part of a unique group consisting of two figures mounted on a chariot, of which figures this one is the larger. Negbi considers the larger figure to be male and the smaller figure to be his consort, but Seeden argues that the larger figure is a goddess and the smaller one is her charioteer.

- MMA L 1970.39.1 P, Syria / male with White Crown, **R in Fist Up with remnant of weapon shaft**, L forward with spear, standing on lion, tang protruding from underneath lion / Collon, "Smiting God," 111-13 and fig. A; Negbi, no. 1308; Seeden, no. 1741.
- Nicosia 1945.V-26.1 Cyprus / male with short rounded headdress, **R in Fist Up**, L forward, tangs under feet / Collon, "Smiting God," fig. 6, no. 2; Negbi, no. 1403; Seeden, no. 1795.
- Nicosia 1949/II-9.1 Choulou, Cyprus / male with short rounded headdress, **R in Fist Up but bent forward**, L forward, existence of tangs not certain / Seeden, no. 1801.
- Nicosia NN (a) LB Enkomi, Cyprus / male with conical headdress, **R in Fist Up with perforated fist**, L forward, tangs under feet / Collon, "Smiting God," fig. 6, no. 1; Negbi, no. 1404; Seeden, no. 1793.
- Nicosia NN (b, field no. 1142) LB Enkomi, Cyprus / male with horned helmet, **R in Fist Up with spear**, L forward with shield, base with single tang under feet / Collon, "Smiting God," fig. 6, no. 3; Negbi, no. 1405; Seeden, no. 1794.
- OI A 7100 P, Syria or Iraq / male with conical headdress, **R in Fist Up with hand missing**, L missing, feet missing / Negbi, no. 1386; Seeden, no. 1756.
- OI A 12627 Iron I-II Tell Judeideh / male with short flat-topped conical headdress, **R in Fist Up with unperforated fist**, L forward, right foot missing, tang under left foot / Negbi, no. 1384; Seeden, no. 1761.
- OI A 18331 Iron I Megiddo / male with plumed headdress, **R in Fist Up with club held in front of head**, L forward with shield, tangs under feet / Collon, "Smiting God," fig. 2, no. 18; Negbi, no. 1361; Seeden, no. 1736.
- OI A 22467 LB Megiddo / male with White Crown, **R in Fist Up with perforated fist**, L missing, tangs under feet / Collon, "Smiting God," fig. 2, no. 17; Negbi, no. 1360; Seeden, no. 1735.
- OI A 24637 P, Latakia, Syria / male with tall headdress, **R in Fist Up with hand missing**, L forward, tangs under feet / Negbi, no. 1381; Seeden, no. 1755.
- Palermo NN Sea near Sciacca, south coast of Sicily / male with plumed White Crown, **R in Fist Up with perforated fist**, L forward with perforated fist, traces of tangs under feet / Collon, "Smiting God," fig. 7, no. 14; Negbi, no. 1412; Seeden, no. 1811.
- PBN 898 P, "Cyprus" / male with horned conical headdress, **R in Fist Up with rod**, L forward with remnant of weapon shaft, base under feet / Collon, "Smiting God," fig. 6, no. 5; Negbi, no. 1400; Seeden, no. 1797.
- PBN 899 P, "Cyprus" / male with conical headdress, **R in Fist Up with perforated fist**, L forward with perforated fist, feet missing / Collon, "Smiting God," fig. 6, no. 6; Negbi, no. 1398; Seeden, no. 1799.
- PBN 900 P, "Cyprus" / male with flat-topped conical headdress, **R in Fist Up**, L forward, tangs under feet / Collon, "Smiting God," fig. 6, no. 7; Negbi, no. 1401; Seeden, no. 1796.

- PBN 901 P, "Cyprus" / male with pointed headdress, **R in Fist Up with perforated fist**, L forward with perforated fist, tangs under feet / Collon, "Smiting God," fig. 6, no. 4; Negbi, no. 1399; Seeden, no. 1798.
- Rockefeller 1078 LB Megiddo / male with short rounded headdress, **R in Fist Up with spear (blade on thumb side)**, L forward with shield, tangs under feet / ANEP, no. 496; Collon, "Smiting God," fig. 2, no. 16; Negbi, no. 1359; Seeden, no. 1737.
- Rockefeller 38.133 LB Lachish / female with short conical headdress, **R in Fist Up**, L forward, tangs under feet / Negbi, no. 1368; Seeden, no. 1727.
- Rockefeller I 9043 'Atlit / male with conical headdress, **R in Fist Up**, L forward, tangs under feet joined / Negbi, no. 1358; Seeden, no. 1743.
- Samos B 1285.1961 Iron II Samos / male with flat-topped conical headdress, **R in Fist Up with perforated fist**, L forward with hand missing, feet missing / Collon, "Smiting God," fig. 7, no. 2; Seeden, no. 1823.
- TIVFU NN P, "Konya, Turkey" / male with round-topped headdress, **R in Fist Up with perforated fist**, L forward with perforated fist, tangs under feet / Collon, "Smiting God," fig. 8, no. 6; Negbi, no. 1372 note; Seeden, no. 1832.
- Tyszkiewicz NN P, Lebanon or North Syria / male with pointed headdress, **R in Fist Up**, L forward, tangs under feet joined / Collon, "Smiting God," fig. 3, no. 27; Negbi, no. 1392.
- UPenn NN (1) LB Beth-shean / male, flat and badly corroded, **L apparently in Fist Up**, R apparently forward / Negbi, no. 1362; Seeden, no. 1767.
- UPenn NN (2) LB Beth-shemesh / male with conical headdress, **R in Fist Up but mostly missing**, L forward but mostly missing, tangs under feet / Negbi, no. 1367; Seeden, no. 1766.
- PLU (1) P, "Ba'albek" / male with flat-topped conical headdress, **R in Fist Up**, L forward, existence of tangs not certain / Collon, "Smiting God," fig. 3, no. 25; Negbi, no. 1422; Seeden, no. 1792.
- PLU (2) Byblos / male, **R in Fist Up**, L forward, existence of tangs not certain / Negbi, no. 1347.
- PLU (3) Byblos / male, **R in Fist Up**, L forward, existence of tangs not certain / Negbi, no. 1350.
- PLU (4) Byblos / male with missing or very short headdress, **R in Fist Up**, L forward, existence of tangs not certain / Negbi, no. 1426; Seeden, no. 1678.
- PLU (5) Etruria / male with rounded headdress, **R in Fist Up**, L forward, base under feet / Collon, "Smiting God," fig. 7, no. 17; Negbi, no. 1414.
- PLU (6) Europe / male, **R in Fist Up**, L forward, existence of tangs not certain / Negbi, no. 1417.
- PLU (7) Europe / male, **R in Fist Up**, L forward, existence of tangs not certain / Negbi, no. 1418.

- PLU (8) Europe / male, **R in Fist Up**, L forward, existence of tangs not certain / Negbi, no. 1419.
- PLU (9) Europe / male, **R in Fist Up**, L forward, existence of tangs not certain / Negbi, no. 1420.
- PLU (10) Lachish / male, **R in Fist Up with hand missing**, L forward, existence of tangs not certain / Negbi, no. 1369.
- PLU (11) LB Byblos / male with conical headdress, **R in Fist Up with perforated fist**, L forward with perforated fist, existence of tangs uncertain / Collon, "Smiting God," fig. 2, no. 15; Negbi, no. 1333; Seeden, no. 1650.
- PLU (12) LB Byblos / male with *atef* crown, **R in Fist Up with hand missing**, L forward, remnants of tangs under feet / Collon, "Smiting God," fig. 2, no. 11; Negbi, no. 1337; Seeden, no. 1661.
- PLU (13) LB Tell el-‘Ajjul / male with short conical headdress, **R in Fist Up**, L missing, feet missing / Petrie, Ancient Gaza III, 8, pls. 15.1, 16.36; Negbi, no. 1370; Seeden, no. 1770.
- PLU (14) LB Tell el-‘Ajjul / male with headdress missing, **R probably in Fist Up but mostly missing**, L missing, tangs under feet / Petrie, Ancient Gaza III, 8, pl. 16.34; Seeden, no. 1768.
- PLU (15) LB Tell el-‘Ajjul / male with head missing, **R probably in Fist Up but mostly missing**, L missing, tangs under feet joined / Petrie, Ancient Gaza III, 8, pl. 16.35; Negbi, no. 1421; Seeden, no. 1769.
- PLU (16) Merj Chamis, Turkey / male with horned headdress, **R in Fist Up**, L forward, base under feet / Negbi, no. 1394; Seeden, no. 1831.
- PLU (17) Near Byblos / male with tall conical headdress, **R in Fist Up**, L forward, existence of tangs not certain / Negbi, no. 1375.
- PLU (18) P, "near Ankara, Turkey" / male with pointed headdress, **R in Fist Up with perforated fist**, L forward, feet missing / Seeden, no. 1786.
- PLU (19) P, "Syria" / male with crested headdress, **R in Fist Up with perforated fist**, L forward with perforated fist, feet missing / Negbi, no. 1389; Seeden, no. 1788.
- PLU (20) P, "Tyre" / male with White Crown, **L in Fist Up**, R forward, tangs under feet joined to header / Collon, "Smiting God," fig. 4, no. 30; Negbi, no. 1371; Seeden, no. 1714.
- PLU (21) P, Byblos / male with conical headdress, **R in Fist Up with perforated fist**, L forward with hand missing, base with tang under feet / Seeden, no. 1674.
- PLU (22) P, Kafr Kanna, Israel / female with three horns and *atef* crown, **R in Fist Up with hand missing**, L forward with mirror or fan, on wide base at each corner of which is a female figure with pointed headdress, hands clasped in front of torso / Negbi, no. 1628; Seeden, no. 1726.

- PLU (23) P, Kilis, Turkey / male with short headdress, **R in Fist Up with hand missing**, L forward, feet missing / Collon, "Smiting God," fig. 5, no. 8; Seeden, no. 1783.
- PLU (24) P, Syria (?) / male with horned conical headdress, **R in Fist Up with hand missing**, L forward with hand missing, feet missing / Seeden, no. 1712.
- PLU (25) Sardinia / male, **R in Fist Up**, L forward, existence of tangs not certain / Negbi, no. 1415.
- PLU (26) Spain / male with conical headdress, **R in Fist Up**, L forward, existence of tangs not certain / Collon, "Smiting God," fig. 7, no. 15; Negbi, no. 1416.
- PLU (27) Syria / male, **R in Fist Up**, L forward, feet missing / Negbi, no. 1316.
- PLU (28) Tyre / male with broken headdress, **R in Fist Up**, L forward, existence of tangs not certain / Negbi, no. 1423.
- PLU (29) Unknown provenance / male with six-horned headdress, **R in Fist Up**, L forward, existence of tangs uncertain / Seeden, no. 1710.

Among the preceding examples, there is variation in whether the figure is male or female, the type of headdress worn by the figure, the weapon held in the hand, and the presence or absence of tangs. The overwhelming majority of the figurines have male characteristics, but twelve are female. Virtually all of the figurines of which the head is extant wear some kind of headdress, typically one that resembles the White Crown (like the Minet el-Beida figurine) or a shorter, conical headdress, and some of the headdresses bear (or once bore) horns. As for the weapons held in the hands, many are similar to the Minet el-Beida figurine in holding the remnants of weapon shafts in one or both hands; others are missing the weapon entirely but have a perforated fist, indicating that the hand could once have held a weapon. A relatively small number still hold a weapon: a mace, spear, sword, battle-axe, or rod. Several have an upraised hand with absolutely no perforation (AUB 2544, Beirut KL 70.508, BM 20727, Damascus RS 21.120, Damascus RS 22.09, Louvre AO 17.236, OI A 12627). Yet others have a missing or otherwise damaged hand, so that it is impossible to tell what kind of weapon the hand originally held, if any. Some figurines bear a tang under each foot, while others stand on a platform

furnished with a single tang, and yet others have no tang at all.⁴² These varying elements have significance for the context of the Fist Up gesture and are discussed in greater depth in the contextual analysis below.

4.2.2. Stone Relief Art Showing the Smiting God Motif

Only five stelae from the Late Bronze Age Levant have been found bearing the smiting god motif, all of which were excavated at Ugarit.⁴³ Of these, one that is exemplary, both in the clarity of detail and in the quality of craftsmanship, is the famous “Baal au foudre” stela (Louvre AO 15.775), shown in figure 2.⁴⁴

⁴² The foregoing observations are based on Collon, “Smiting God”; Negbi, *Canaanite Gods in Metal*; and Seeden, *Standing Armed Figurines*. These sources generally agree with one another, with some exceptions. For example, Seeden, *Standing Armed Figurines*, no. 1681, is female but is incorrectly described as male in Negbi, *Canaanite Gods in Metal*, no. 1344.

⁴³ Marguerite Yon, “Stèles de pierre,” in *Arts et industries de la pierre*, Ras Shamra-Ugarit 6 (Paris: Éditions Recherche sur les Civilisations, 1991), 273-343, nos. 5, 12, 13, 15, 17.

⁴⁴ This stela was first published by Claude F.-A. Schaeffer, “Les fouilles de Minet-el-Beida et de Ras-Shamra: Quatrième campagne (printemps 1932), rapport sommaire,” *Syria* 14 (1933): 122-24 and pl. 16.

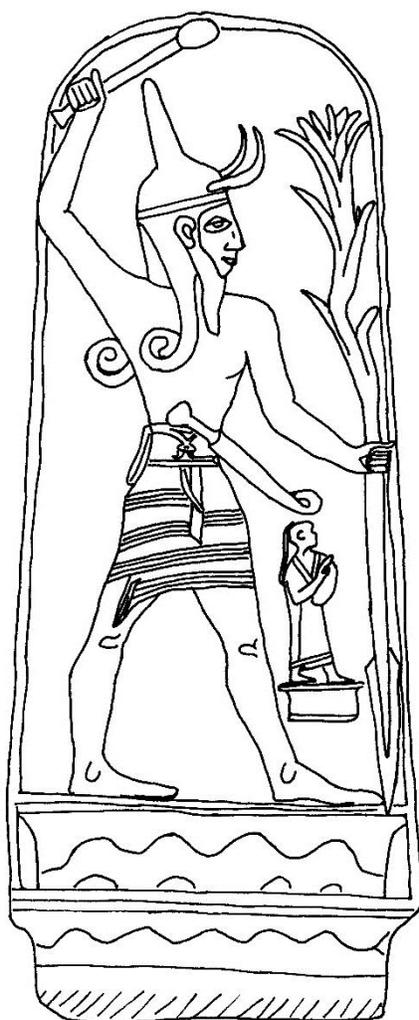


Figure 2. The “Baal au foudre” stela from Ugarit.
Drawn by the author after Shaeffer, *Ugaritica II* (1949), pl. 24.

The large figure shown on the stela is thought to be the god Baʿlu based on the findspot of the stela (a short distance outside the courtyard of Ugarit’s main temple) and the iconographic characteristics of the figure.⁴⁵ The god is shown facing right, his left foot forward. His costume, consisting of a horned helmet and a kilt, is consistent with his role as a divine warrior. His right hand is raised above his head and holds a mace. In his left hand is a spear whose blade rests on

⁴⁵ Ibid.

the ground and whose shaft curves and forks in such a way that it resembles flames or foliage. This spear is thought to signify both lightning and vegetation (embodying both the harmful and the beneficent aspects of Ba‘lu’s character as storm god).⁴⁶ A short sword, sheathed and hanging at the belt, is the third and last item of the god’s panoply. The mace, the spear, and the short sword have each been identified with weapons mentioned in Ugaritic and Egyptian literature in connection with Ba‘lu, as shown in the following table.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Claude F.-A. Schaeffer, “La stèle du «Ba‘al au foudre» de Ras-Shamra (Musée du Louvre),” *Fondation Eugène Piot: Monuments et mémoires* 34 (Paris: Leroux, 1934), 7-8; Claude F.-A. Schaeffer, “La grande stèle du Baal au foudre de Ras Shamra,” in *Ugaritica II* (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1949), 126-27; Elizabeth Williams-Forte, “The Snake and the Tree in the Iconography and Texts of Syria during the Bronze Age,” in *Ancient Seals and the Bible*, ed. Leonard Gorelick and Elizabeth Williams-Forte (Malibu, California: Undena, 1983), 28-30, 35-36; Pierre Bordreuil, “Recherches ougaritiques, I: Où Baal a-t-il remporté la victoire contre Yam?” *Semitica* 40 (1991): 19; Terry Fenton, “Baal au foudre: Of Snakes and Mountains, Myth and Message,” in *Ugarit, Religion and Culture*, ed. Nicolas Wyatt, Wilfred G. E. Watson, and J. B. Lloyd (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1996), 61-62; Susan J. Sanders, “Baal au Foudre: The Iconography of Baal of Ugarit,” in *“He Unfurrowed His Brow and Laughed”*: *Essays in Honour of Professor Nicolas Wyatt*, ed. Wilfred G. E. Watson (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2007), 261-62.

⁴⁷ Loren R. Fisher and F. Brent Knutson, “An Enthronement Ritual at Ugarit,” *JNES* 28 (1969): 159n10; Marvin H. Pope and Jeffrey H. Tigay, “A Description of Baal,” *UF* 3 (1971): 124; Williams-Forte, “The Snake and the Tree,” 35-36; Nicolas Wyatt, “A Further Weapon for Baal?” *UF* 22 (1990): 465; Bordreuil, “Recherches ougaritiques, I,” 19; Gregorio del Olmo Lete, “The Divine Panoply (KTU 1.65: 12-14),” *Aula Orientalis* 10 (1992): 254-55; Pierre Bordreuil and Dennis Pardee, “Le combat de Ba‘lu avec Yammu d’après les textes ougaritiques,” in *Mari: Annales de Recherches Interdisciplinaires*, vol. 7 (Paris: Éditions Recherche sur les Civilisations, 1993), 67-68. In addition, Wyatt views the weapon in Baal’s upraised right hand as an axe and connects this with his reading of *q<r>dm* or *qdm* “axe” in *KTU* 1.4 vii 40. However, despite damage to the top of the stela, the weapon in Baal’s hand is more likely a mace than an axe, and the word *qdm* in the Ugaritic passage can also be understood as meaning “before.” See Wyatt, “A Further Weapon for Baal?” 465; Nicolas Wyatt, *Religious Texts from Ugarit* (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 110-11. It should also be noted that W. G. Lambert, “Trees, Snakes and Gods in Ancient Syria and Anatolia,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 48 (1985): 441-42, has challenged the identification of ‘š *brq* in *KTU* 1.101 4 as a weapon of Ba‘lu; his objections, however, do not present a more plausible alternative but simply serve to highlight the tentative nature of the identification. For the Egyptian text, see Adhémar Massart, *The Leiden Magical Papyrus I 343 + I 345* (Leiden: Brill, 1954), 17, 38, 65, 66-67, and pls. 2, 10; J. F. Borghouts, *Ancient Egyptian Magical Texts* (Leiden: Brill, 1978), 19.

Table 15. Weapons of Ba‘lu in Ugaritic and Egyptian Literature

Ugaritic or Egyptian name	Translation	Textual source(s)
ʾarz	cedar	<i>KTU</i> 1.4 vii 40
<i>ktp</i>	sword	<i>KTU</i> 1.6 v 1
<i>mrḥ</i>	spear	<i>KTU</i> 1.6 i 50-52
š brq	tree of lightning	<i>KTU</i> 1.101 4
šmd	mace	<i>KTU</i> 1.2 iv 11-25; 1.6 v 1
*ʿš	cedar	pLeiden 343 + 345 v 1; vii 8
*ḥnyt n ʿš	spear of cedar	pLeiden 345 + 345 v 2; vii 9

Note: The examples from Egyptian are marked with an asterisk (*).

The god stands upon a double pedestal marked with a series of horizontal straight and wavy lines.

These lines may represent layers of the cosmos, including the sky, mountains, and the sea.⁴⁸

There is also a smaller figure who stands on a single pedestal in front of Ba‘lu’s left leg, his head almost touching the tip of the sheath that hangs at the god’s belt. This figure is similar to the god in his orientation and stride, but he is different in dimension and dress. He also performs a

⁴⁸ The significance of these lines has been the subject of differing opinions. The excavator of the stela, Claude F.-A. Schaeffer, suggested that the wavy lines represent mountains (he compared the Egyptian hieroglyphs for “mountain” and “foreign land,” ♣ and • respectively). Ba‘lu does not stand directly on the mountains but above them, signifying that he is in heaven. See Schaeffer, “Fouilles de Minet-el-Beida et de Ras-Shamra,” 123-24; Schaeffer, “La stèle du «Ba‘al au foudre»,” 10; Schaeffer, “La grande stèle du Baal au foudre,” 128-29. Williams-Forte, “The Snake and the Tree,” 30, suggests that the wavy lines are “symbolic either of rounded mountainous forms or of the writhing serpent.” The first to point out that the two bands of straight lines form a double pedestal was Marguerite Yon, “Baal et le Roi,” in *De l’Indus aux Balkans, Recueil J. Deshayes* (Paris, 1985), 180; the wavy lines, according to Yon, represent water, as Baal is lord of the waters that bring fertility and is also the conqueror of the sea. Bordreuil, “Recherches ougaritiques, I,” 21-27, argues that the two sets of wavy lines represent the mountain chain including Jebel el-Aqra‘ (Mt. Saphon) and, below it, the sea. Fenton, “Baal au foudre,” 49-61, argues at length that the upper set of wavy lines is a depiction of a serpent, while the lower one represents the sea. Sanders, “The Iconography of Baal of Ugarit,” 258-59, suggests that the lines on the upper pedestal represent “the mountains which marked the edge of the living world,” while those on the lower pedestal represent the underworld; in this connection, she quotes from an episode in the Ba‘lu cycle, *KTU* 1.4 viii 5-15, which mentions Ba‘lu lifting up a mountain to enter the underworld. Interesting comparanda for the pedestal on which Baal stands are found in Nina de Garis Davies and Alan H. Gardiner, *The Tomb of Huy, Viceroy of Nubia in the Reign of Tutankhamun (No. 40)*, Theban Tombs Series 4 (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1926), pl. 25. Two of the Nubian shields depicted in Huy’s tomb painting bear scenes that take place atop a pedestal, and each pedestal has straight lines at the top and bottom and an undulating line between them, just like the stela from Ugarit. On one of the shields, the scene is of the Pharaoh smiting a cowering enemy with a spear, the pose being very similar to that of Baal on the Ugarit stela. These comparanda do not rule out any of the proposals just outlined, except that they tend to argue against Bordreuil’s idea of localizing the mountains specifically in the vicinity of Ugarit.

different gesture, his right hand raised with the palm facing outward. The palm-outward gesture and the identity of the smaller figure are discussed below in section 4.3.

The other four stelae from Ugarit that show the smiting god motif are listed below. The conventions followed in this list are the same as in the long list of figurines above, except for the absence of tangs and the necessary attention to the direction of the figure.

- Damascus 4471 LB Ugarit / male with horned conical headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with empty fist**, L forward with empty hand / Yon, *SP*, no. 12.
- Damascus 6355 LB Ugarit / male with horned pointed headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with empty fist (or possibly weapon?)**,⁴⁹ L forward with bow / Yon, *SP*, no. 13.
- Damascus 6357 LB Ugarit / male with White Crown, facing left, **L in Fist Up with empty fist**, R forward with spear (blade pointing upward) / Yon, *SP*, no. 15; Cornelius, *ICGRB*, 138-39, pl. 33 (no. BR2).
- Damascus NN LB Ugarit / male with White Crown, facing right, **R in Fist Up with mace**, L forward with bow (or shield?), quiver hanging at back / Yon, *SP*, no. 17.

There is some significant variation compared with the “Baal au foudre” stela, although the pose remains essentially the same. On Damascus 6357, for example, the god faces left instead of right, raising his left fist above his head and grasping a spear in his right hand. The god’s headdress on two stelae is similar to that on the Minet el-Beida figurine, resembling the Egyptian White Crown, while the god on the other two stelae wears a short horned helmet. The god’s panoply also differs from one stela to another. On Damascus NN, the god holds a mace in his upraised hand (as on the “Baal au foudre” stela), but there are at least two stelae on which the god is definitely shown brandishing only his fist, holding no weapon (Damascus 4471, 6357), and this

⁴⁹ Yon sees the raised fist as having just released the bowstring (Yon, *SP*, 309). However, as other examples (including, perhaps, the fourth stela in this list) show, the upraised hand sometimes holds a separate weapon and can therefore be unrelated to the bow in the left hand. It is also possible that what I have interpreted as horns running across the headdress and touching the hand could be a weapon. It would be unusual for the weapon to pass in front of the forehead, but there is no space at the top of the stela for the weapon to go above the head as would normally be expected; one may also compare the figurine OI A 18331, which holds a club that passes in front of the forehead.

may be the case also on a third stela of the group (Damascus 6355). The hand that is held forward grasps a spear or a bow (or, in one case, possibly a shield) or is empty. The “tree of lightning” spear, smaller figure, and double pedestal of the “Baal au foudre” stela have no parallel among these other stelae found at Ugarit.

A large group of stelae from New Kingdom Egypt shows the god Rashap in smiting pose. He typically holds a long-handled axe or a mace in his upraised hand and a shield, sometimes together with a spear, in his left. The same group of stelae also includes a representation of the goddess ‘Anatu, seated and in the same smiting pose, with a long-handled axe in her upraised right hand and a spear and shield in her left. These stelae have recently been studied quite extensively by Cornelius.⁵⁰ As mentioned above, these Rashap stelae include many Northwest Semitic iconographic elements, and Boreux has even suggested that the stelae were produced by “Syrian” immigrant workmen in Egypt.⁵¹ Although Boreux’s hypothesis may be disputed,⁵² there is no doubt that the smiting Rashap figures on these stelae are essentially Northwest Semitic in their poses and attributes, just as the god Rashap himself is primarily a Northwest Semitic deity. Even so, some aspects of the stelae themselves caution against including them in our corpus of Levantine art, especially when these stelae are compared with the smiting god stelae from Ugarit.

⁵⁰ Cornelius, *ICGRB*, 25-51, pls. 1-17; Izak Cornelius, *The Many Faces of the Goddess: The Iconography of the Syro-Palestinian Goddesses Anat, Astarte, Qadesh, and Asherah c. 1500-1000 BCE* (Fribourg: Academic Press, 2004), 21-22, pls. 1.1, 5.1. It should be noted that a stela showing a nearly identical image of ‘Anatu is regarded by Wyatt as being from Ugarit; see Nicolas Wyatt, “The ‘Anat Stela from Ugarit and Its Ramifications,” *UF* 16 (1984): 327-37. However, the attribution to Ugarit seems to be a mistake; if the stela is indeed authentic, it is most probably from Egypt. It was formerly in the collection of G. Michaelidis in Cairo and is now lost (Cornelius, *Many Faces of the Goddess*, 22). In any case, the depiction of ‘Anatu in this stela is wholly Egyptian.

⁵¹ Charles Boreux, “La stèle C. 86 du musée du Louvre et les stèles similaires,” in *Mélanges syriens offerts à monsieur René Dussaud* (Paris: P. Geuthner, 1939), 2:683-87.

⁵² Boreux suggests that dedicants mentioned on the stelae who have Egyptian names have changed their originally Northwest Semitic names to fit in in Egyptian society (others mentioned in the stelae have Semitic names). This is a plausible scenario, yet it is not the only possibility. For example, the dedicants of the stelae could be the descendants of Northwest Semitic immigrants, perhaps even from mixed marriages, and could thus be generations removed from direct exposure to a Northwest Semitic homeland.

First, the Rashap stelae seem to derive exclusively from Egypt.⁵³ They are executed in sunken relief, similarly to other stelae from Egypt in this period, while the majority of the stelae from Ugarit are in bas relief.⁵⁴ The Rashap stelae also bear hieroglyphic inscriptions that follow the conventions characteristic of Egyptian inscribed votive stelae, while all of the smiting god stelae from Ugarit are uninscribed. For these reasons, we do not include the Rashap stelae in our corpus proper. Nevertheless, the evidently close relationship of these stelae to Northwest Semitic culture, iconography, and religious concepts justifies appealing to their attributes and inscriptions in the contextual analysis below.

An Iron Age II stela from Amrit (Louvre AO 22247) shows a male figure with a tasseled Egyptianizing headdress (including a uraeus in front), facing right, his right hand in Fist Up with a throwstick, his left hand forward and holding a young lion by the feet.⁵⁵ This figure stands upon a lion, which stands in turn atop seven partially-superimposed rows of small mountains. Above the figure's head is a crescent and sun disk, and above that, at the very top of the stela, is a Phoenician-style winged sun disk. The stela also bears a Phoenician inscription, which is

⁵³ Cornelius, *ICGRB*, 50.

⁵⁴ The single exception to this is Damascus NN. Yon actually identifies the deity on this stela as Rashap (Yon, *SP*, 313), and it is possible that this stela should be grouped together with the Rashap stelae from Egypt. The quiver on the back is also found in two Egyptian examples (Cornelius, *ICGRB*, pls. 12 [no. RR18], 15 [no. RR20]), and what Yon identifies as the top part of a bow (Yon, *SP*, 313) could also be interpreted as the top of an angular shield (cf. Cornelius, *ICGRB*, pls. 3 [no. RR4], 4 [no. RR5], 10 [no. RR13]). The presence of the quiver does not require a bow (cf. Cornelius, *ICGRB*, pl. 12 [no. RR18]). If this analysis is correct, then this would indeed place the tradition of the Egyptian Rashap stelae in a Levantine context. However, given its fragmentary nature and relatively undetailed execution, Damascus NN could just as easily be placed in a group of its own, independent of the Egyptian Rashap stelae.

⁵⁵ *AOB*, no. 307; *ANEP*, no. 486. Contenau, *Manuel*, 1474, describes the weapon in the right hand as “une arme courbe qui est une variété de harpè,” and Pritchard, *ANEP*, 306, describes it as “a throw stick or curved sword.” The idea that it is a throwstick, which follows Gressmann, *AOB*, 88 (“Wurfholz”), seems to me more likely; if it were a sword, one would expect it to be larger, since there is ample space between the figure's crown and the crescent and sun disk. Georges Perrot, *History of Art in Phoenicia and Its Dependencies* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1885), 2:11-13, declares that an Assyrian relief from Khorsabad, which shows a male figure holding a young lion with one arm and a short weapon in the other hand, provides “a model for the weapon brandished in the right hand of this god of Amrit”; however, he does not elaborate on the nature of this weapon, and the parallel between the reliefs is far from exact at any rate.

unfortunately badly eroded.⁵⁶ Although the crescent and sun disk, the throwstick, the lion on which the god stands, and the lion held in the left hand are new compared to the smiting god stelae of the Bronze Age, the basic smiting pose and the mountains at the bottom show continuity with the earlier tradition. The winged sun disk is found on other stelae from the earlier period, such as the seated ʾIlu stela from Ugarit discussed below (Aleppo 4622), and the motif of standing on the lion is also attested for one of the smiting god figurines discussed above (MMA L 1970.39.1). The provenance, iconography, and inscription of the Amrit stela place it most comfortably within a Northwest Semitic context, so this stela is included in our corpus proper, even though some of the iconographic elements are similar to other traditions (see immediately below) or are innovative compared to the Bronze Age stelae.

Other Iron Age stelae showing the smiting god motif come from Carchemish, Til-Barsib, Arslan Tash, Zinjirli, and other sites.⁵⁷ These stelae are quite homogenous iconographically. They differ from the Amrit stela in at least five respects: (1) the winged sun disk, when there is one, is of Hittite and not Phoenician type;⁵⁸ (2) the weapons are different, usually consisting of a single-bladed axe in the upraised right hand and a forked representation of lightning in the left;⁵⁹ (3) the god's dress shows markedly Hittite features, like an ornate conical headdress and shoes

⁵⁶ On this inscription, see Mark Lidzbarski, *Ephemeris für semitische Epigraphik*, vol. 1 (Giessen: J. Ricker, 1902), 282-83. The reading of the inscription is too uncertain to be of much use in providing a context for the Fist Up gesture; the only fairly certain portions, according to Lidzbarski, read *l'dny...k šm' ql* "for his lord...because he heard his voice."

⁵⁷ *AOB*, nos. 339, 340; *ANEP*, nos. 501, 531, 532, 611; Hawkins, *CHLI* I, 1:171-73, 227-30, 239-43, 269-72, 309-12, 328-29, 351-52; 2:526-27, 564-65; pls. 58-59, 91-92, 99-100, 118-23, 149-51, 164, 177-78, 301, 322; Guy Bunnens, *A New Luwian Stele and the Cult of the Storm-God at Til Barsib-Masuwari* (Louvain: Peeters, 2006).

⁵⁸ Irene Winter, "Phoenician and North Syrian Ivory Carving in Historical Context: Questions of Style and Distribution," *Iraq* 38 (1976): 4-6, pls. 1-2; Dominique Parayre, "À propos des sceaux ouest-sémitiques: Le rôle de l'iconographie dans l'attribution d'un sceau à une aire culturelle et à un atelier," in *Studies in the Iconography of Northwest Semitic Inscribed Seals*, ed. Benjamin Sass and Christoph Uehlinger (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1993), 27-51.

⁵⁹ As will be shown below, cylinder seals included in our corpus show similar combinations of weapons, including the forked lightning weapon in the lowered hand. However, the consistency of these weapons, in combination with the other features listed here, mark these stelae as belonging to a distinctive style separate from the Northwest Semitic tradition.

with upturned toes;⁶⁰ (4) it is always a bull and not a lion on which the god stands; and (5) when the stela bears an inscription, it is in hieroglyphic Luwian.⁶¹ These stelae are generally recognized as belonging to the “North Syrian” or “Late Hittite” style.⁶² Although they are important to the present study for purposes of comparison, they must be excluded from the main corpus, since their cultural context is properly Luwian and not Northwest Semitic.

A stone plaque from Iron Age II Arslan Tash (Aleppo 1329), on which is inscribed an incantation in Phoenician, also bears an image of a smiting god figure.⁶³ The figure wears a short flat-topped headdress, faces right, raises his right hand in Fist Up with a single-bladed axe, and puts his left hand forward. The inscription and iconography of the plaque justify its inclusion in our main corpus. The inscription on this plaque does not affect the interpretation of the Fist Up gesture except in a general sense, since it is an incantation against evil spirits and thus implies an apotropaic use of the gesture (see below).

4.2.3. Carved Ivories Showing Smiting Figures

A number of carved ivory pieces excavated at the Assyrian site of Nimrud show figures in Fist Up. The ivories from Nimrud belong to various artistic styles, only some of which are characteristically Assyrian, showing that many of the ivories originated in various locales outside

⁶⁰ Cf. Akurgal, *Art of the Hittites*, pls. 84-85 (relief of Tudkhaliya IV), 104-5 (“Neo-Hittite” reliefs from Malatya).

⁶¹ A stela from Arslan Tash (Louvre AO 13092 = *ANEP*, no. 501) is somewhat of an outlier in its technique and iconography. It shows the god barefoot and with a lightning bolt in the upraised hand. His striding pose is ascending, his left knee being bent, in accordance with the slanted contour of the bull on which he stands. The bull itself is bonier than in the other stelae, and its legs are spread out farther. The god’s robe and the carefully-modeled contours of his muscles are characteristically Mesopotamian. Instead of a winged sun disk, a Mesopotamian-style star of Shamash hovers directly over the god’s headdress (cf. Anthony Green, “Ancient Mesopotamian Religious Iconography,” in *CANE*, 3:1838). However, other elements of the stela, such as the lightning bolt in the god’s left hand and the fact that he stands upon a bull, are shared with the other examples discussed here.

⁶² Akurgal, *Art of the Hittites*, 127-30; Winter, “Carchemish,” 180-81.

⁶³ Cornelius, *ICGRB*, 180-81, 257, fig. 43; Bunnens, *New Luwian Stele*, 117-18, 161, fig. 74 (no. 18). The inscription is discussed in Gibson, *Textbook of Syrian Semitic Inscriptions*, 3:78-88; *KAI*, no. 27; Frank Moore Cross and Richard J. Saley, “Phoenician Incantations on a Plaque of the Seventh Century B.C. from Arslan Tash in Upper Syria,” *BASOR* 197 (1970): 42-49.

of Assyria. Four main artistic traditions have been discerned among these ivories: (1) the Phoenician tradition, linked to the art of eastern Mediterranean coastal cities and showing heavy indebtedness to Egyptian iconography; (2) the Syrian tradition (also called “South Syrian” and “Intermediate”), linked to the art of Samaria, Damascus, and other parts of the western Levant and incorporating Egyptian elements that have been heavily modified; (3) the North Syrian tradition, linked to the art of Zinjirli, Carchemish, and other northern Syrian sites and showing stylistic features similar to those of Hittite and Mesopotamian art; and (4) the Assyrian tradition, which is thoroughly Mesopotamian in style and iconography.⁶⁴ For the present study, the most relevant traditions are the first two, the Phoenician and Syrian traditions. The North Syrian tradition of ivory carving, like the North Syrian style of stone relief work discussed above, is excluded (except for comparative purposes) because of its primarily Anatolian cultural orientation. Indeed, as a general rule, the Phoenician and Syrian traditions show close affinities with each other, while both the North Syrian and the Assyrian traditions are markedly separate in terms of the themes, motifs, and iconographic elements that are employed.

The first group of ivories showing the Fist Up gesture depict a male figure slaying a griffin or a lion; most of these pieces belong to what Mallowan calls the “St. George and the

⁶⁴ Irene Winter, “Phoenician and North Syrian Ivory Carving in Historical Context: Questions of Style and Distribution,” *Iraq* 38 (1976): 1-22; Irene Winter, “Carved Ivory Furniture Panels from Nimrud: A Coherent Subgroup of the North Syrian Style,” *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 11 (1977): 25-54; Irene Winter, “Is There a South Syrian Style of Ivory Carving in the Early First Millennium B.C.?” *Iraq* 43 (1981): 101-130, pls. 6-17; Georgina Herrmann and Stuart Laidlaw, *Ivories from the North West Palace* (Ivories from Nimrud VI; London: British Institute for the Study of Iraq, 2008), 75-111.

Dragon series” of Nimrud ivories.⁶⁵ This group, which includes ivories belonging to both the Phoenician and the Syrian traditions,⁶⁶ shows a male figure about to slay a griffin or dragon.

- Birmingham
451'65e Iron II Nimrud (ND 10314) / male with highly stylized headdress reminiscent of Double Crown, facing right, **R in Fist Up with sword** poised to thrust into upturned beak of griffin, L forward and grasping head crest of griffin / IN V, 105, pl. 68 (no. 328); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 33 (no. S0344).
- BM
2011.6001.364 Iron II Nimrud (ND 8170 + 8162) / winged male with no headdress, facing left, **L in Fist Up with spear** poised to thrust into upturned beak of griffin, R forward and grasping head crest of griffin / IN V, 72, pl. 30 (no. 141); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 17 (no. S0145).
- Cleveland 68.45 Iron II Nimrud (ND 9584) / male with crown, facing left, **L mostly missing but probably in Fist Up with spear (partially extant)** poised to thrust into upturned beak of griffin, R forward and grasping head crest of griffin / IN IV, 85, pl. 18 (no. 85); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 81 (no. S1027).
- IM 60532 Iron II Nimrud (ND 6377) / winged male with partially missing headdress, facing left, **L in Fist Up with partially missing weapon (spear or sword)** poised to thrust into upturned beak of griffin, R forward and grasping head crest of griffin / IN IV, 85, pl. 19 (no. 86); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 81 (no. S1028).
- IM 62661 Iron II Nimrud (ND 7563) / male with Double Crown, facing left, **L in Fist Up with sword** poised to thrust into upturned beak of griffin, R forward and grasping head crest of griffin / IN V, 89-90, pl. 49 (no. 240); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 25 (no. S0247).
- IM 65221 Iron II Nimrud (ND 9398) / male with no extant headdress, facing right, **R mostly missing but originally in Fist Up with sword** poised to thrust into lion of which only the paws are extant,⁶⁷ L forward but mostly missing / Mallowan, *Nimrud*, 2:534-35, fig. 450; IN V, 98, pl. 55 (no. 297); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 30 (no. S0309).

⁶⁵ Max Mallowan, *Nimrud and Its Remains* (London: Collins, 1966), 2:536-37, 586-88. Mallowan includes in this designation only those pieces in which the target is a griffin; the designation thus excludes IM 65221, IM 65366, and others in which the target is a lion.

⁶⁶ Winter, “Phoenician and North Syrian Ivory Carving,” 10-11, pl. 6; Herrmann and Laidlaw, IN VI, 76-78, 88-89. The specific style-group of the Syrian tradition to which the non-Phoenician members of this group belong is known as the “crown and scale” style-group (Herrmann and Laidlaw, IN VI, 88).

⁶⁷ Part of the sword is extant, as is the figure’s shoulder; the position of the arm and hand can easily be deduced from the extended shoulder and the angle of the sword. It is theoretically possible that the target is a griffin instead of a lion; however, the griffin in this series of ivories is usually closer to the ground.

- IM 65318 Iron II Nimrud (ND 10416) / male with Double Crown, facing left, **L in Fist Up with sword** poised to thrust into upturned beak of griffin, R forward and grasping head crest of griffin / IN IV, 115, pl. 71 (no. 318); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 96 (no. S1260).
- IM 65336 Iron II Nimrud (ND 10449) / male with no headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with short sword**, L forward and grasping head crest of griffin / IN IV, 225, pls. 308-9 (no. 1176); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 154 (no. S2121).
- IM 65360 Iron II Nimrud (ND 10500) / winged male with no extant headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with spear** poised to thrust downward into upturned beak of griffin,⁶⁸ L forward and grasping head crest of griffin / Mallowan, *Nimrud*, frontispiece and 2:536-37, fig. 455; IN IV, 207-8, pl. 273 (no. 1051); Winter, "Phoenician and North Syrian Ivory Carving," pl. 6a; Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 146 (no. S1996).
- IM 65366 Iron II Nimrud (ND 10530) / winged male with long locks but no headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with sword** poised to thrust into lion's chest, L extended forward / IN IV, 83, pl. 17 (no. 78); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 81 (no. S1021).
- IM 65372 Iron II Nimrud (ND 10544) / male with double crown, facing right, **R in Fist Up with spear** poised to thrust into upturned beak of griffin, L forward and grasping head crest of griffin; griffin is upon mountain covered with stylized trees, male figure's right foot is missing / IN IV, 84-85, pl. 19 (no. 84); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 81 (no. S1026).
- IM 65418 Iron II Nimrud (ND 10696) / male with long locks but no headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with sword** poised to thrust into upturned beak of griffin, L forward and grasping head crest of griffin; the male figure and griffin stand atop mountain covered with stylized trees; the male figure's left knee is flexed, pushing into throat of griffin / Mallowan, *Nimrud*, 2:536-37, fig. 456; IN IV, 84, pl. 17 (no. 79); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 80 (no. S1020).
- IM 65471 Iron II Nimrud (ND 10552) / male with Double Crown, facing left, **L in Fist Up with sword** poised to thrust into upturned beak of griffin, R forward and grasping head crest of griffin / IN IV, 115, pl. 71 (no. 317); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 96 (no. S1259).
- IM 65509 Iron II Nimrud (ND 11036) / winged male with Double Crown, facing left, **L in Fist Up with spear** poised to thrust into upturned beak of griffin, R forward and grasping head crest of griffin / Mallowan, *Nimrud*, 2:548-50, fig. 485; Winter, "Phoenician and North Syrian Ivory Carving," pl. 6b.

⁶⁸ The weapon is mostly missing, except for the part of the shaft that crosses in front of the figure's chest, but the length of the weapon (i.e., the distance between the figure's hand and the griffin's beak) and the uniform width of the shaft argue that it is a spear and not a sword. Mallowan calls the weapon a "lance"; see Mallowan, *Nimrud*, 2:536.

- IM NN (1) Iron II Nimrud (ND 8063) / winged male with head missing, **R missing but probably in Fist Up with sword or spear (partially extant)** poised to thrust into lion's chest, L forward / IN IV, 84, pl. 16 (no. 80); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 81 (no. S1022).
- IM NN (2) Iron II Nimrud (ND 9588) / male with no headdress, facing left, **L mostly missing but probably in Fist Up with sword or spear (partially extant)** poised to thrust into griffin (mostly missing), R forward, mostly missing but probably grasping griffin's head crest / IN IV, 84, pl. 17 (no. 81); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 81 (no. S1023).
- IM NN (3) Iron II Nimrud (ND 9585) / male with no headdress, facing right (but slightly turned toward a frontal view), **R in Fist Up with sword** poised to thrust into upturned beak of griffin, L mostly missing but forward and probably grasping head crest of griffin; the combat takes place on what could be a representation of a mountain (partially missing) / IN IV, 217, pl. 292 (no. 1117); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 150 (no. S2062).
- MFA 66.917 Iron II Nimrud (ND 10695) / male with Double Crown, facing right, **R in Fist Up with sword** poised to thrust into upturned beak of griffin, L forward and grasping head crest of griffin / IN IV, 115, pls. 71-72 (no. 319); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 97 (no. S1261).
- MMA 61.197.11 Iron II Nimrud (ND 10471) / male with Double Crown, facing right, **R in Fist Up with sword** poised to thrust downward into upturned beak of griffin, L forward and grasping griffin by head crest / Mallowan, *Nimrud*, 2:587-88, fig. 559; IN IV, 114, pl. 71 (no. 316); Winter, "Phoenician and North Syrian Ivory Carving," pl. 6c; Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 96 (no. S1258).
- MMA 67.22.1 Iron II Nimrud (ND 9586) / male with no headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with sword** poised to thrust downward, L forward; target missing / IN IV, 217, pl. 292 (no. 1118); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 150 (no. S2063).
- Tokyo 9090-1 Iron II Nimrud (ND 10446) / male with partially missing headdress, facing left, **L in Fist Up with sword** poised to thrust into upturned beak of griffin, R forward and grasping head crest of griffin; griffin is upon mountain covered with stylized trees, male figure's left foot rests on similar but smaller mountain / IN IV, 84, pl. 18 (no. 82); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 81 (no. S1024).
- Tokyo 9090-3 Iron II Nimrud (ND 9352) / male with no headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with sword** poised to thrust into upturned beak of griffin, L forward and grasping head crest of griffin; griffin is upon mountain covered with stylized trees, male figure's right foot rests on similar but smaller mountain / IN IV, 84, pl. 18 (no. 83); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 81 (no. S1025).

UPenn 61.3.1 Iron II Nimrud (ND 7564) / male with Double Crown, facing left, **L in Fist Up with sword** poised to thrust downward into upturned beak of griffin, R forward and grasping griffin by head crest / Mallowan, *Nimrud*, 2:586-88, fig. 558; Winter, “Phoenician and North Syrian Ivory Carving,” pl. 6d; IN V, 90, pl. 49 (no. 241); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 25 (no. S0248).

Carved ivories provide more data for contextual analysis than the majority of figurines and stelae, since they show the smiting figure within a slightly larger context, facing a target. The target in this group of ivories is always a griffin or a lion, more often the former. The motif is essentially the same regardless of which of these two targets is represented; IM 65366 and IM 65418, for instance, were originally joined, and the scene is identical in these two pieces except for the difference in the target and the presence of a mountain in IM 65418.⁶⁹

Unlike the figurines and stelae, all of the carved ivories in this group show the agent of the Fist Up gesture holding a weapon in his upraised hand. The weapon is always either a sword or a spear. Both of these weapons are attested in other forms of the motif and in other media, yet the sword, in particular, is unusually common in this group of ivories.

The Agent in these examples is uniformly a male figure. He often shows youthful characteristics, including the lack of a beard (the exceptions to this are IM 65366, IM 65418, IM NN [1], and IM NN [2]). This figure has usually been referred to in published sources with imprecise terms such as “hero” and “youth,” but whether he is a god, demigod, or mortal is unknown.⁷⁰ However, some higher status, such as that of a god or a king, is implied in those examples in which the figure wears the Egyptian Double Crown or its altered Syrian version;

⁶⁹ An image of these two pieces joined can be found in Georgina Herrmann, Helena Coffey, and Stuart Laidlaw, *The Published Ivories from Fort Shalmaneser, Nimrud: A Scanned Archive of Photographs* (London: British School of Archaeology in Iraq, 2004), 80 (no. S1019).

⁷⁰ See Max Mallowan, *The Nimrud Ivories* (London: British Museum, 1978), 40, 56-57; Glenn Markoe, *Phoenician Bronze and Silver Bowls from Cyprus and the Mediterranean* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 46n66, 47-48.

similarly, those examples in which a mountain covered with small trees is shown under the smiting figure's feet reveal his larger-than-life physical size, implying that he has a greater-than-average status. Uncertainty about the identity of this youthful "hero" is not an obstacle to the inclusion of these pieces in our corpus, since our focus is more on the form of the gesture and on the convergence of contextual elements than on the identification of the motif with a particular agent (cf. the discussion of ivories showing the smiting Pharaoh motif below in this section).

Although this group of ivories includes the distinctive features just outlined, this group also shows marked similarities to other forms of the smiting god motif, justifying the inclusion of these pieces in a general study of the smiting god motif such as this. Most notable is the basic similarity in pose, standing or striding with one hand raised high as if to smite and the other hand lowered. There is also the occasional presence of a mountain or mountains under the figure's feet. Mallowan, evidently mindful of these similarities, specifically compares IM 65418 to the "Baal au foudre" stela (Louvre AO 15.775), suggesting that the design of the latter could have been the inspiration for the "St. George and the Dragon" subject; according to Mallowan, "the differences are understandable when we recall that the two designs are separated by an interval of about five centuries."⁷¹ Even if the specific link between these pieces is speculative, we find no fault in Mallowan's recognition of a commonality of motif. Further, the ivory IM 65336 shows an intermediate form of the motif: the beardless youth raises a short sword as if to slay a griffin, but instead of the weapon being pointed diagonally downward into the griffin's beak, it is raised and held horizontally, just like the smiting god figures shown on stelae and cylinder seals. This example argues against rigidly separating this group of ivories from other examples of the smiting god motif.

⁷¹ Mallowan, *Nimrud*, 2:536-37.

The youthful warrior about to slay a griffin also appears in other forms of Levantine art from the same period. For example, this form of the motif appears on a stamp seal from near Jerusalem (IAA J. 894), and it also appears on several Phoenician metal bowls.⁷² These other pieces are discussed below.

Another piece from Nimrud (IM 79516) shows a scene similar to the Egyptian motif of the smiting Pharaoh. A male with the Egyptian Blue Crown faces right, his right hand in Fist Up with an uncertain weapon, his left hand forward and grasping a bow, arrows, and the hair of a cowering captive.⁷³ This scene, while typically Egyptian in many respects, also includes some un-Egyptian features, such as the Syrian beard and unusual disc-topped scepter of the attendant behind the smiting figure.⁷⁴ Herrmann and Laidlaw classify the piece as belonging to the “classic Phoenician” style-group.⁷⁵ This type of scene, with a figure dressed like the Egyptian Pharaoh and smiting prisoners, is also found on the Samaria ivory discussed immediately below and on the Phoenician metal bowls discussed in section 4.2.5.

A carved ivory panel from Samaria depicts a male figure wearing the Egyptian Double Crown and facing right, his right hand raised in Fist Up with a mace, his left hand forward and grasping the hair of a cowering captive.⁷⁶ This scene would appear to be thoroughly Egyptian if

⁷² Cf. Eric Gubel, “The Iconography of Inscribed Phoenician Glyptic,” in *Studies in the Iconography of Northwest Semitic Inscribed Seals*, ed. Benjamin Sass and Christoph Uehlinger (Fribourg: University Press, 1993), 107.

⁷³ IN VI, 198-99, pls. 82-83, color pl. A (no. 258). Herrmann and Laidlaw (in *ibid.*) call the instrument in the smiting figure’s hand an “angled feather fan,” apparently following a comment to the same effect by Kenneth Kitchen (which they include at the bottom of their description of the object, *ibid.*, 198-99). The instrument is not fully extant, as there is a break immediately above the guard of the handle. An angled feather fan would be highly unusual as a weapon in this scene. For these reasons, we consider the identification of this instrument to be uncertain.

⁷⁴ K. A. Kitchen, in IN VI, 198-99.

⁷⁵ Herrmann and Laidlaw, in IN VI, 198.

⁷⁶ J. W. Crowfoot and Grace M. Crowfoot, *Early Ivories from Samaria* (London: Palestine Exploration Fund, 1938), 31, pl. 14.1; Keel, *Symbolism of the Biblical World*, 296, fig. 401; Othmar Keel and Christoph Uehlinger, *Göttinnen, Götter und Gottessymbole: Neue Erkenntnisse zur Religionsgeschichte Kanaans und Israels aufgrund bislang unerschlossener ikonographischer Quellen* (Freiburg: Herder, 1995), 298-99, fig. 262b; Martin Klingbeil, *Yahweh Fighting from Heaven: God as Warrior and as God of Heaven in the Hebrew Psalter and in Ancient Near Eastern Iconography* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1999), 174.

it were not for a lotus bud that appears behind the smiting figure's back. This combination leads Keel, followed also by Klingbeil, to attribute this piece to a "Levantine origin."⁷⁷ In support of these assessments, one may also cite the fact that the other ivory panels found in context with this one mix Egyptian and Levantine elements, and none appears to be thoroughly Egyptian in style. We thus include this piece (along with the Nimrud ivory IM 79516) in our main corpus.

The importation from Egyptian into Levantine art of the motif of a smiting figure grasping a cowering captive by the hair, as opposed to the abridged form of the motif without the cowering captive, is attested not only on the ivories just discussed but also on the Phoenician metal bowls presented below in section 4.2.5. In this form of the motif in Levantine art, it is not certain whether the male figure that is depicted is a king or a god. Comparison with the Egyptian use of the motif is indecisive with regard to the figure's identity in Levantine art, for the Pharaoh himself was both royal and divine, and Egyptian sources even linked the Pharaoh with the Semitic god Ba'lu.⁷⁸ For the purposes of this study, the identity of the figure in Levantine examples of this motif is not critical, provided that the figure is either a god or his servant (such as a king). This is because the literary sources, with which we seek to establish connections in this chapter, clearly describe both gods and their servants performing similar gestures. Indeed, the blurring of distinctions between divine and mortal agents of gestures appears to be a hallmark of Northwest Semitic literature; thus it is possible that the ambiguity we encounter as to the agents of gestures in art reflects what was originally intended with these pieces, and this may actually strengthen the connection with the literary sources. Even so, our corpus is formed not on

⁷⁷ Keel and Uehlinger, *Göttinnen, Götter und Gottessymbole*, 298-99, fig. 262b; Klingbeil, *Yahweh Fighting from Heaven*, 174. The quoted phrase is Klingbeil's. There is a tradition of ivory carving in Egypt, although it does not appear to have been as prominent as the Levantine tradition; for some examples of Egyptian ivories, see Richard D. Barnett, *Ancient Ivories in the Middle East* (Jerusalem: Ahva Press, 1982), 16-22, pls. 3-12.

⁷⁸ Glenn Markoe, *Phoenician Bronze and Silver Bowls from Cyprus and the Mediterranean* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985), 45-46; cf. Klingbeil, *Yahweh Fighting from Heaven*, 174.

the basis of the agent's identity (which would lead to circularity in our overall effort to link artistic motif with gesture phrase, since the identity of the agent is one of the criteria used to establish this link), but rather on the basis of the gesture itself and the general convergence of visually apparent contextual elements. In summary, our corpus of examples of the Fist Up gesture is formed irrespective of who it is that performs the gesture. The question of the identity of agents who perform the Fist Up gesture is taken up in the contextual synthesis below (section 4.2.7.6).

There is also one ivory from Nimrud that shows the smiting god motif in a style other than Northwest Semitic. This ivory depicts a bearded figure grasping a lion with his left hand and raising his right hand in Fist Up with a mace; the style of the piece is Assyrian.⁷⁹ While this piece is useful as evidence for the history of the smiting god motif in ivory work, the piece does not bear directly on the contextual characteristics of the motif in Levantine art, so it is excluded from our corpus.

4.2.4. The Smiting God Motif in Glyptic Art

As has been mentioned, it is likely through glyptic art that the smiting god motif made its first appearances in the Levant, as the earliest examples of the motif are found on cylinder seals dated to the Middle Bronze Age. The motif continues on Late Bronze Age cylinder seals and on stamp seals of the Iron Age.

Our presentation of the relevant data from glyptic art begins with cylinder seals and impressions belonging to the so-called "Syrian style" and dated to the Middle and Late Bronze Ages. We focus on the Syrian style because it is the only regional style of Bronze Age cylinder

⁷⁹ Mallowan, *Nimrud Ivories*, 20-21 (no. 15).

seals that can be placed squarely within a predominantly Northwest Semitic cultural context.⁸⁰ Many of these seals and impressions have been purchased on the antiquities market and are therefore of uncertain provenance. Some, however, come from excavations at Ugarit, Alalakh, and Emar, and two bear an inscription of a king of Sidon and can therefore be attributed with certainty to that city.

As an example of this type of seal, one from Ugarit (Damascus 2617), dating to the Late Bronze Age, is shown in figure 3.⁸¹

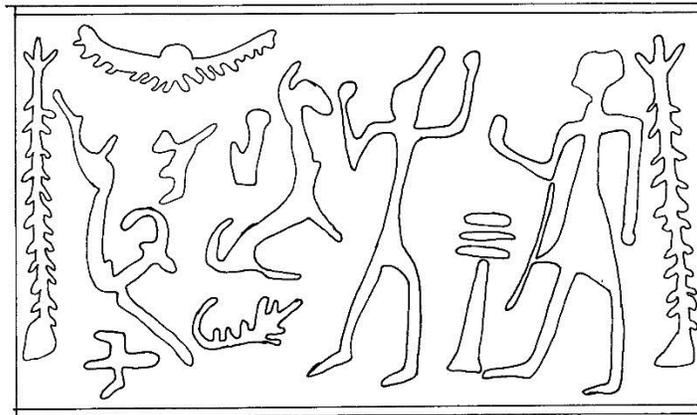


Figure 3. Cylinder seal from Ugarit.
Drawn by the author after Amiet, *SC*, 79 (no. 148).

This seal shows a male with a White Crown-like headdress, facing left, his left hand in Fist Up with no weapon, and his right hand forward with no weapon. In the field before him are several creatures, which can be identified (with varying degrees of certainty) as birds, a griffin, a scorpion, and a caprid. These creatures appear to be the target of the smiting figure's gesture.

The remaining Syrian-style seals and impressions are described in the following list.

⁸⁰ In general on the Syrian style and some of its defining features, see Dominique Collon, *First Impressions: Cylinder Seals in the Ancient Near East* (London: British Museum Publications, 1987), 44, 55. Seals from other regional styles are useful for comparison; although these are not treated in detail in the present study, their contribution to our topic is summarized below.

⁸¹ Amiet, *SC*, 71, 79 (no. 148).

- Aleppo 2835 LB Ugarit / male or female figure with no visible headdress, facing left, **L in Fist Up with faint trace of weapon shaft**, R forward with staff; this figure stands on lion which faces right / Amiet, *SC*, 88, 99 (no. 184).
- Aleppo 4765 LB Ugarit / male figure with horned headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with faint trace of weapon shaft**, L in Palm Out / Amiet, *SC*, 72, 80 (no. 154).
- Aleppo M 1024 P, LB Syria / male with pointed headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with hand obscured**, L forward with spear (blade upward) / Hammade, 90-91 (no. 168); Cornelius, *ICGRB*, 176, pl. 46 (no. BM12).
- Aleppo M 4592 P, LB Syria / male with pointed headdress, facing left, **L in Fist Up with mace**, R forward with axe / Hammade, 88-89 (no. 166); Cornelius, *ICGRB*, 176, pl. 46 (no. BM11).
- Aleppo M 6035⁸² P, LB Syria / male with horned and spiked headdress, facing left, **L in Fist Up with mace**, R forward with hand obscured / Hammade, 90-91 (no. 169); Cornelius, *ICGRB*, 177, pl. 46 (no. BM13).
- Aleppo M 6338 P, MB Syria / male with horned and spiked headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with weapon (perhaps mace)**, L forward with weapon or shield; the figure faces a bovine which stands on its hind legs next to a ladder / Hammade, 60-61 (no. 113).
- Aleppo M 6339 P, MB Syria / male with round-topped headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with no weapon**, L forward with mace; he kicks kneeling foe and hits him with L (with butt of mace); male with round-topped headdress, facing left (toward back of kneeling foe), **L in Fist Up with no weapon**, R down in front / Hammade, 88-89 (no. 163).
- Aleppo M 6399 P, MB Syria / male with conical headdress, facing left, **L in Fist Up with no weapon**, R forward with spear or rod;⁸³ the figure stands upon a couchant goat / Hammade, 78-79 (no. 147).
- Aleppo ME 74 LB Emar / male with horned headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with mace**, L forward with axe, curved weapon, and leash of bull / Beyer, *Sceaux*, 260 (no. F14).
- Aleppo ME 80 LB Emar / male with horned headdress, facing right, standing in chariot, **R in Fist Up with no visible weapon**, L forward with reins of two horses / Beyer, *Sceaux*, 264 (no. F21).
- Aleppo ME 113 LB Emar / male with horned headdress, facing left, **L in Fist Up with partially-obscured weapon (perhaps mace)**, R forward with curved throwstick and leash of bull; second male smiting figure, mostly obscured, also facing left / Beyer, *Sceaux*, 261 (no. F15).

⁸² The number given by Cornelius is Aleppo 6053; since Cornelius cites only Hammade, we assume that Cornelius' number is incorrect and not based on an independent investigation of the object.

⁸³ Hammade interprets the weapon held in R as a whip, but the weapon is straight and would therefore seem to be more rigid than a whip. See Hammade, 78.

- Aleppo Msk
73.1066 LB Emar / male with obscured headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with hand obscured**, L forward with spear, axe, and leash of bull / Beyer, *Sceaux*, 260 (no. F13); Cornelius, *ICGRB*, 171-72, pl. 45 (no. BM4).
- Aleppo Msk
74.769 LB Emar / procession of deities facing right, including three smiting god figures: male figure with pointed headdress, **R in Fist Up with hand obscured**, L folded across chest; male figure with horned headdress, **R in Fist Up with rod**, L forward with forked lightning, left foot resting on winged beast which faces right, apparently plunging lightning into head of beast; male figure with pointed headdress, **R in Fist Up with uncertain weapon (perhaps whip)**, L forward with spear pointing downward, left foot resting on winged beast which faces right, figure apparently plunging spear into head of beast / Beyer, *Sceaux*, 264-65 (no. F22).
- Aleppo Msk
75.31 LB Emar / male figure with horned conical headdress, facing left, **L in Fist Up with hand obscured**, R forward with short rod or club / Beyer, *Sceaux*, 256 (no. F6).
- Aleppo (?) RS
9273 LB Ugarit / male with unusual horned headdress, facing left, **L in Fist Up with mace**, R forward with spear (blade downward) whose shaft resembles vegetation or lightning; winged sun disk above / Cornelius, *ICGRB*, 172, pl. 45 (no. BM5).
- Amman J. 9808 LB Tell Deir ‘Alla / male without distinct headdress,⁸⁴ facing right, **R in Fist Up with obscure weapon**, L forward with staff whose head resembles a plant / Cornelius, *ICGRB*, 174-75, pl. 46 (no. BM8).
- Antakya 7318
(1) MB Alalakh / male with crested round helmet, facing left, **L in Fist Up with single-bladed axe**, R forward with bow / Collon, *SITA*, 25-26 (no. 31).
- Antakya 7318
(2) MB Alalakh / male with head missing, facing right, **R probably in Fist Up but mostly missing**, L forward with weapon and leash of couchant bull / Collon, *SITA*, 27 (no. 34).
- Antakya 7322
(1) MB Alalakh / male with horned and spiked headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with mace**, L forward with axe and leash / Collon, *SITA*, 26 (no. 32).
- Antakya 7761
(1) MB Alalakh / male with headdress missing, facing right, **R probably in Fist Up but mostly missing**, L forward with axe and leash / Collon, *SITA*, 27-28 (no. 35).
- Antakya 7761
(2) MB Alalakh / male with headdress missing, facing right, **R in Fist Up with hand missing**, L forward with three weapons including axe / Collon, *SITA*, 28 (no. 36).
- Antakya 7761
(3) MB Alalakh / male with head missing, facing left, **L probably in Fist Up but missing**, R forward with shafted weapon that is partially missing / Collon, *SITA*, 30 (no. 41).

⁸⁴ Cornelius, *ICGRB*, 174, says that this figure wears a “high headdress.” However, we fail to see this. There is almost no room between the figure’s head and the edge of the field.

- Antakya 7900 (1) MB Alalakh / probably male but with head and most of body missing, facing right, **R in Fist Up with hand missing**, L missing / Collon, *SITA*, 29 (no. 38).
- Antakya 7960-61 (1) MB Alalakh / male with horned conical headdress, facing right, **R probably in Fist Up but missing**, L forward with axe, flail or throwstick,⁸⁵ and leash / Collon, *SITA*, 26 (no. 33).
- Antakya 7960-61 (2) MB Alalakh / male or female figure with horned flat-topped headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with spear**, L probably forward but missing / Collon, *SITA*, 28-29 (no. 37).
- Antakya 7960-61 (3) MB Alalakh / male with head missing, facing right, **R in Fist Up with hand missing**, L probably forward but mostly missing / Collon, *SITA*, 29 (no. 39).
- Antakya 7960-61 (4) MB Alalakh / male with head missing, facing left, **L in Fist Up with hand missing**, R forward with leash of (missing) bull / Collon, *SITA*, 30 (no. 40).
- Antakya 7960-61 (5) MB Alalakh / male with horned headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with mace**, L probably forward with forked lightning bolt, although hand itself is missing⁸⁶ / Collon, *SITA*, 31 (no. 43).
- Antakya 7960-61 (6) MB Alalakh / male with horned and spiked headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with weapon**, L forward with arrow, other weapon, and leash / Collon, *SITA*, 31-32 (no. 44).
- Antakya 7967 LB Alalakh / stick figure, facing left, **L in Fist Up apparently without weapon**, R forward with animal possibly grasped by its feet; various human and animal figures scattered in representational field / Collon, *ACS*, 112, unnumbered plate (no. 99).
- Antakya 8009 MB Alalakh / male with horned and spiked headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with partially-obscured weapon (probably mace)**, L forward with leashes of two bulls / Collon, *ACS*, 54-55, unnumbered plate (no. 20).
- Antakya 8012 Alalakh / male with headdress obscured, facing left, **L in Fist Up with hand obscured**, L forward with hand obscured; he is facing the back of a rampant lion that is attacking a pair of goats / Collon, *ACS*, 36, unnumbered plate (no. 4).
- Antakya 8170 Alalakh / male with horned and spiked headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with partially-obscured weapon (probably mace)**, L forward with non-distinctive weapons / Collon, *ACS*, 55, unnumbered plate (no. 21).
- Antakya 8340 (1) LB Alalakh / male with headdress missing, facing right, **R in Fist Up with hand missing**, L forward with no weapon / Collon, *SITA*, 113-14 (no. 207).

⁸⁵ Collon, *SITA*, 26, states that this is a flail, but the weapon bears some resemblance to the throwstick (or short sword?) in the Amrit stela (Louvre AO 22247), for which see above.

⁸⁶ The forked part of the lightning bolt is visible, but since the hand is missing, it is impossible to be sure which of the two facing figures on the seal holds it. Cf. Collon, *SITA*, 31.

- Antakya 8340 (2) LB Alalakh / male with headdress obscured, facing left, **L in Fist Up with weapon (probably a mace, but obscured)**, R forward with no weapon / Collon, *SITA*, 117-18 (no. 214).
- Antakya 8505 LB Alalakh / male with headdress missing, facing right, **R in Fist Up with hand missing**, L forward with weapon (probably a mace, but obscured) / Collon, *SITA*, 116 (no. 212).
- Antakya 8627 LB Alalakh / male with horned and knobbed headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with hand missing**, L forward with weapon (possibly forked lightning bolt⁸⁷) / Collon, *SITA*, 118-19 (no. 216).
- Antakya 8840 LB Alalakh / male with headdress missing, facing right, **R in Fist Up with hand missing**, L forward to grasp horns of a couchant gazelle; a lion, facing right, attacks the gazelle from above / Collon, *SITA*, 124 (no. 223).
- Antakya 8906 MB Alalakh / male with horned headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with axe**,⁸⁸ L forward with mace / Collon, *SITA*, 32 (no. 45).
- Antakya 8908 LB Alalakh / male with horned and spiked headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with mace**, L forward with sling (?)⁸⁹ / Collon, *SITA*, 117 (no. 213); Cornelius, *ICGRB*, 170-71, pl. 45 (no. BM2).
- Antakya 8971 LB Alalakh / male with horned headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with weapon (mostly missing, but probably axe or mace)**, L forward with disk-and-crescent standard and leash of a (missing) bull / Collon, *SITA*, 114 (no. 208).
- Antakya 8973 MB Alalakh / male with head missing, facing right, **R probably in Fist Up but mostly missing**, L forward with unidentified instrument; in front of this figure and under L is a smaller robed figure, facing right / Collon, *SITA*, 31 (no. 42).
- Antakya 9076 LB Alalakh / male with horned conical headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with hand missing**, L forward with knobbed staff / Collon, *SITA*, 118 (no. 215).
- Antakya 9123 (= 9062, 8731, 8562) LB Alalakh / male with horned headdress, facing left, **L in Fist Up with weapon (obscured, probably mace)**, R forward with dagger; he faces a scene of a raptor with spread wings, grasping two gazelles with its talons / Collon, *SITA*, 121 (no. 219).
- Antakya 9735 LB Alalakh / two male figures with horned headdresses, facing right, **R in Fist Up with weapon obscured**, L forward; these two figures are part of a procession / Collon, *SITA*, 108 (no. 200).

⁸⁷ Collon, *SITA*, 119 (referring to a parallel from Nuzi).

⁸⁸ Collon, *SITA*, 32, refers to this weapon as “a mace (or possibly an axe),” but it is markedly different from the mace in the left hand, which has a globular head that is clearly absent from the weapon in the right hand.

⁸⁹ Cornelius (*ICGRB*, 171n2) suggests that this could be an Egyptian *ankh* symbol, but it lacks the pronounced horizontal arms of the *ankh* immediately below it, and it would also seem strange for a smiting god to hold forth a symbol of life.

- Ashmolean 1892.1388 P, Syria / male or female with tall headdress, facing left, **L in Fist Up with nondescript weapon**,⁹⁰ R forward but obscured; he or she is riding on an animal, possibly a horse / Buchanan, *AM* 1, 200, pl. 62 (no. 1011).
- Ashmolean 1909.1185 P, Syria / male with conical headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with obscured weapon (probably mace)**,⁹¹ L forward with forked lightning bolt / Buchanan, *AM* 1, 196-97, pl. 61 (no. 993).
- Ashmolean 1914.1 P, LB Syria / male with horned and spiked headdress, facing left, **L in Fist Up with mace**, R forward with forked lightning bolt;⁹² the figure stands upon a bull / Buchanan, *AM* 1, 197, pl. 61 (no. 994); Cornelius, *ICGRB*, 177-78, pl. 47 (no. BM16).
- Beirut B 1658 LB Byblos / male with horned and spiked headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with mace**, L forward with hand obscured but probably holding leash to the couchant bull at the figure's feet / Cornelius, *ICGRB*, 172-73, pl. 45 (no. BM6).
- BLM 6876 P, LB Syria / male with horned and spiked headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with no weapon**, L forward with spear (blade downward) whose shaft resembles vegetation or lightning / Cornelius, *ICGRB*, 175, pl. 46 (no. BM9); Oscar White Muscarella, ed., *Ladders to Heaven: Art Treasures from Lands of the Bible* (Toronto: Lands of the Bible Archaeological Foundation, 1981), 247.
- BM 89514 P, MB Syria / male with horned and spiked headdress, facing left, **L in Fist Up with mace**, R forward with vegetation/lightning spear / Beatrice Teissier, *Egyptian Iconography on Syro-Palestinian Cylinder Seals of the Middle Bronze Age* (Fribourg and Göttingen: University Press and Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1996), 58, 116, 198 (no. 42).
- BM 126174 Alalakh / male with skull cap or no headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with double-headed mace**, L forward / Collon, *ACS*, 119-20, unnumbered plate (no. 108).
- BM 126333 P, MB Syria / male with horned and spiked headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with mace**, L forward with cluster of weapons / Teissier, *Egyptian Iconography*, 87, 202, unnumbered plate (no. 164).

⁹⁰ Buchanan (*AM* 1, 200) identifies this weapon as a dagger, but it could be a mace or even an axe.

⁹¹ The identification as a mace, which follows Buchanan (*AM* 1, 196), is supported by comparison with the cylinder seals Antakya 7960-61 (5), Ashmolean 1914.1, and BM 129580, and with the stela Louvre AO 15775 (the “Baal au foudre” stela). In all of these examples, the god holds a mace in the upraised hand and a form of lightning bolt in the other.

⁹² Although Cornelius, *ICGRB*, 178, refrains from judgment as to the identifications of these weapons, they are sufficiently clear in the photographs to permit agreement with the tentative (marked with question marks) judgment of Buchanan, *AM* 1, 197. This seal is a harbinger of the “North Syrian” style, as can be seen from the forked lightning bolt in combination with the motif of standing upon a bull.

- BM 129580 P, MB Levant / male with horned and spiked helmet, facing right, **R in Fist Up with mace**, L forward with lightning bolt (?); he is poised to thrust the lightning bolt downward into a scorpion at his feet; sun disk in crescent above / Collon, *FI*, 54-55 (no. 220).
- BM 130652 LB Alalakh / male with horned headdress, facing left, **L in Fist Up with no weapon**, R forward with unidentified instrument⁹³ / Collon, *ACS*, 75, unnumbered plate (no. 48); Cornelius, *ICGRB*, 171, pl. 45 (no. BM3).
- BM 131613 LB Alalakh / male with round cap or helmet, facing right, **R in Fist Up with hand missing**, L forward but mostly missing / Collon, *SITA*, 113 (no. 206).
- BM 131627 LB Alalakh / female with horned and spiked headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with dagger**, L forward with sling (?);⁹⁴ she apparently sits on the head of a male figure who is grappling two other figures / Collon, *SITA*, 123 (no. 222).
- BM NN Syria / male with horned and spiked helmet, facing right, **R in Fist Up with mace**, L forward with axe, throwstick, and leash of couchant bull; he stands on two mountains / Porada, "Cylinder Seal from Tell el-Dab'a," 486, pl. 65.2.
- Brussels NN P, MB Syria / male figure with rounded headdress, facing left, **L in Fist Up with single-bladed axe**, R forward and holding wrist of cowering prisoner / Teissier, *Egyptian Iconography*, 116-17, 205 (no. 248).
- Damascus 72 P, LB Syria / male with conical headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with mace**, L forward with spear (blade upward) / Cornelius, *ICGRB*, 177, pl. 47 (no. BM14).
- Damascus 107 P, Unknown provenance / male with spiked headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with no weapon**, L forward with unidentified instrument;⁹⁵ circle above⁹⁶ / Cornelius, *ICGRB*, 175-76, pl. 46 (no. BM10).
- Damascus 2539 LB Ugarit / male with no discernible headdress, facing left, **L in Fist Up with no visible weapon**, R forward with spear pointing downward / Amiet, *SC*, 95, 107 (no. 233).

⁹³ Collon describes this instrument as "a symbol which may be a combined mace and lightning symbol or god sign; below it is a quartered disc" (Collon, *ACS*, 75) The head, however, is a bit too large to pass easily for a mace head.

⁹⁴ Collon (*SITA*, 123) calls the object in the left hand an *ankh*, but it resembles the object held in the left hand of the male figure in Antakya 8908, which latter object Collon identified as a sling (Collon, *SITA*, 117). Cf. note to Antakya 8908 in the present list.

⁹⁵ Kühne, cited in Cornelius, *ICGRB*, 175, identifies the instrument in the left hand as a ring, but it looks more like a curved dagger.

⁹⁶ Cornelius, *ICGRB*, 175, apparently interprets this circle as horns; however, it would be unusual for the horns to be so large, to protrude from the top of the spike, and to meet above. Alternatively, the bottom of the circle could be interpreted as horns (though they would still protrude from the spike), and the top could be interpreted as a sickle sword held in the upraised right hand. There does appear to be a slight seam between the two halves of the circle. Ultimately, the interpretation of the circle as a separate iconographic element seems most likely to the present writer.

- Damascus 2598 LB Ugarit / male with no headdress, facing left, **L in Fist Up with no weapon**, R forward with no weapon; large sphinx in front of this figure, facing left / Amiet, *SC*, 71, 78 (no. 145).
- Damascus 2633 MB Ugarit / male with indistinct headdress, facing left, **L in Fist Up with axe**, R forward with shield; unidentified quadruped, facing right, in front of him; scorpion in field between smiting male and quadruped / Amiet, *SC*, 17, 20 (no. 15).
- Damascus 2644 LB Ugarit / procession of figures facing left, including two smiting figures: male with indistinct headdress, **L in Fist Up with no visible weapon**, R forward with spear facing upward; male with indistinct headdress, **L in Fist Up with indistinct weapon shaft**, R forward with indistinct object / Amiet, *SC*, 122, 125 (no. 285).
- Damascus 2679 LB Ugarit / two males with indistinct headdresses, facing each other in mutually symmetrical smiting pose, **outer hand in Fist Up with spear**, inner hand forward with shield; fallen human figure between them / Amiet, *SC*, 17-18, 20 (no. 16).
- Damascus 2700 LB Ugarit / male with no headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with no visible weapon**,⁹⁷ L forward with foliated branch / Amiet, *SC*, 123-24, 126 (no. 294).
- Damascus 2715 LB Ugarit / male with no headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with short, curved weapon (possibly throwstick)**,⁹⁸ L forward with spear pointing upward / Amiet, *SC*, 76, 84 (no. 175).
- Damascus 2728 LB Ugarit / male with no headdress, facing left, **L in Fist Up with no discernible weapon**, R forward with no weapon / Amiet, *SC*, 88, 99 (no. 187).
- Damascus 2744 LB Ugarit / male with conical headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with no visible weapon**, L forward with long-shafted weapon; scorpion in field before him / Amiet, *SC*, 76, 85 (no. 181).
- Damascus 2747 LB Ugarit / male with no headdress, facing left, **L in Fist Up with weapon (possibly club)**, R forward with spear pointing upward / Amiet, *SC*, 74, 82 (no. 165).
- Damascus 2798 LB Ugarit / male or female figure with no distinguishable headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with short, indistinct weapon**, L forward with spear pointing downward; quadrupeds in field on either side / Amiet, *SC*, 140, 144 (no. 339).
- Damascus 2834 LB Ugarit / male with no headdress, facing left, **L in Fist Up with no visible weapon**, R forward with shafted weapon or staff,⁹⁹ bull and caprid in field before him / Amiet, *SC*, 137-38, 141 (no. 317).

⁹⁷ The right hand extends above the border of the field, making it impossible for a weapon to be represented.

⁹⁸ Amiet calls this simply “une arme courte.” It is unlikely to be a sickle sword, since it is so short and since the concave side faces upward/outward.

- Damascus 2855 LB Ugarit / male with no headdress, facing left, **L in Fist Up with no visible weapon**, R forward with three-forked weapon or branch / Amiet, *SC*, 54, 60 (no. 105).
- Damascus 2862 MB Ugarit / male with horns, facing right, **R in Fist Up with mace**, L forward with two crossed spears pointing downward / Amiet, *SC*, 27, 30 (no. 37).
- Damascus 2894 LB Ugarit / two figures facing right: male with conical headdress, **R in Fist Up with mace**, L forward with spear pointing upward; male with conical headdress, **R in Fist Up with axe**, L forward with staff; caprid in front of them / Amiet, *SC*, 18, 20 (no. 17).
- Damascus 2930 LB Ugarit / male or female with no headdress, facing left, **L in Fist Up with no weapon**, R forward with no weapon / Amiet, *SC*, 115, 120 (no. 281).
- Damascus 2957 LB Ugarit / procession of figures facing right, including two smiting figures: male with no headdress, **R in Fist Up with no visible weapon**, L forward with no weapon; male with no headdress, **R in Fist Up with no visible weapon**, L forward with spear pointing upward / Amiet, *SC*, 122, 125 (no. 284).
- Damascus 2960 LB Ugarit / male with no headdress, facing left, **L in Fist Up with rod**, R forward with no weapon / Amiet, *SC*, 70, 78 (no. 142).
- Damascus 3009 LB Ugarit / male with conical headdress, facing left, **L in Fist Up with mace**, R forward with spear or rod; smaller figure also faces right, occupying space between larger figure's legs and weapon / Amiet, *SC*, 73-74, 81 (no. 162).
- Damascus 3016 MB Ugarit / male with horned and spiked headdress, facing left, **L in Fist Up with mace**, R forward with axe and sickle sword / Amiet, *SC*, 27, 30 (no. 39).
- Damascus NN LB Ugarit / male with no headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with mace**, L forward holding animal¹⁰⁰ by its rear feet / Amiet, *SC*, 94, 106 (no. 227).
- De Clercq 395 P, MB Levant / male with conical headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with single-bladed axe**, L forward and grasping hair of smaller figure, who stands facing right with L raised, possibly in Palm Out; procession of figures dressed just like this smaller figure, facing right, comes behind smiting figure; winged sun disk above and to right of smiting figure / Frankfort, *CS*, pl. 42f; Teissier, *Egyptian Iconography*, 116-17, 205 (no. 250).
- Durham N 2408 P, MB Syria / male with horned and spiked headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with mace**, L forward with single-bladed axe and curved object / Teissier, *Egyptian Iconography*, 64, 199 (no. 70).

⁹⁹ Amiet omits mention of an object in the extended right hand, although he notes the presence of globules in the field, two of which seem to form the head of the long object. Aligned with these two globules, but under the hand, is a clearly distinct vertical line, most likely the lower part of the weapon or staff.

¹⁰⁰ This animal may be a caprid or a calf. It has a pair of protrusions atop its head, which may be straight horns or ears. We follow Amiet, who calls it simply "un animal."

- Erlenmeyer collection NN (Bâle) Unknown provenance / male with horned and knobbed helmet, facing right, **R in Fist Up with mace**, L forward with axe and leash of small rampant bull or caprid / Collon, "Aleppo Workshop," 36, 41 (no. 7).
- Louvre A 913 Unknown provenance / male with horned and spiked helmet, facing right, **R in Fist Up with mace**, L forward with axe, throwstick, and leash of (missing) couchant bull / Collon, "Aleppo Workshop," 36, 41 (no. 16).
- Louvre AO 1183 P, Levant / male with horned and spiked headdress, facing left, **L in Fist Up with mace**, R forward with foliated branch; snake and bird in field before him / Delaporte, *Catalogue II*, 193, pl. 96 (no. A. 918); Keel, Keel-Leu, and Schroer, *Studien*, 263-65 (no. 66).
- Louvre AO 1900 P, Levant / male with horned and spiked headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with mace**, L forward with axe, curved object, and leash of couchant bull / Delaporte, *Catalogue II*, 193, pl. 96 (no. A.915) (mislabelled in plate as A.916); Keel, Keel-Leu, and Schroer, *Studien*, 258-59 (no. 41).
- Louvre AO 10862 P, MB Syria / male with horned and spiked headdress, facing left, **L in Fist Up with mace**, R forward with single-bladed axe, curved object, and leash of couchant bull / Teissier, *Egyptian Iconography*, 81, 201 (no. 141).
- Louvre AO 14811 LB Ugarit (Minet el-Beida) / male with *atef* crown, facing left, **L in Fist Up with no weapon**,¹⁰¹ R forward with spear pointing upward / Frankfort, *CS*, pl. 45b; Amiet, *SC*, 53, 58 (no. 92).
- Louvre AO 14816 LB Ugarit / male or female figure with conical headdress, facing left, **L in Fist Up with no weapon**, R forward with no weapon / Amiet, *SC*, 95, 107 (no. 235).
- Louvre AO 17252 LB Ugarit / male figure with no headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with mace**, L forward with curved weapon; caprid in field before him / Amiet, *SC*, 139, 142 (no. 325).
- Louvre AO 17253 LB Ugarit / male or female with obscured headdress, facing left, **L in Fist Up with no visible weapon**, R forward with no visible weapon¹⁰² / Amiet, *SC*, 73, 81 (no. 159).
- Louvre AO 17471 LB Ugarit / male with no headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with no visible weapon**,¹⁰³ L forward with staff whose head resembles triangle or lotus blossom / Amiet, *SC*, 123, 125 (no. 288).
- Louvre AO 17472 LB Ugarit / male with no visible headdress, facing left, **L in Fist Up with no visible weapon**, R forward with no visible weapon / Amiet, *SC*, 55, 61 (no. 111).

¹⁰¹ There is an X-shaped element behind the upraised hand; this could possibly be interpreted as a radically stylized axe, although its angle would be awkward, and the degree of abstraction would not be consistent with the other elements represented on the seal. Amiet interprets this element as a "croix de St André" belonging to the field behind the smiting figure.

¹⁰² As Amiet observes, the figure seems to hold the field border as if it were a spear. Likewise, the border above the figure's head may be interpreted as a weapon shaft held by the upraised left hand.

¹⁰³ The hand passes above the field border, making it impossible to represent a weapon in the hand.

- Louvre AO 19408 LB Ugarit / male with winged headdress,¹⁰⁴ facing left, **L in Fist Up with mace**, R forward with lightning/vegetation spear pointing downward / Amiet, *SC*, 73, 81 (no. 158).
- Louvre AO 22361 P, LB Sidon / male with White Crown, facing right, **R in Fist Up with mace**, L forward with shield / Frankfort, *CS*, pl. 44p; Cornelius, *ICGRB*, 92, pl. 27 (no. RM2).
- Louvre AO 22362 P, LB Sidon / male with White Crown, facing left, **L in Fist Up with mace**, R forward with shield / Collon, *FI*, 127, 129, 130 (no. 551); Cornelius, *ICGRB*, 93, pl. 27 (no. RM3).
- Louvre AO 26146 LB Ugarit / male or female with no headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with short, indistinct weapon**, L forward with no weapon / Amiet, *SC*, 57, 65 (no. 136).
- Louvre N 3528 P, Levant / male with horned and spiked helmet, facing right, **R in Fist Up with mace**, L forward with curved axe (?) / Frankfort, *CS*, pl. 44j.
- Marcopoli 442 P, MB Syria / male with horned and spiked helmet, facing left, **L in Fist Up with mace**, R forward and grasping hair of cowering prisoner / Collon, *FI*, no. 541; Teissier, *Egyptian Iconography*, 116-17, 205 (no. 247).
- Marcopoli 455 P, MB Syria / male with tall, rounded headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with axe**, R forward and grasping wrist of prone captive / Teissier, *Egyptian Iconography*, 116-17, 205 (no. 249).
- Montreal NN MB Syria / male with pointed headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with mace**, L forward with throwstick or small sickle sword; he stands on a pedestal on which are represented rows of mountains / Teissier, *Egyptian Iconography*, 52, 197 (no. 19).
- Moore 160 P, MB Syria / male with *nemes* headdress, facing left, **L in Fist Up with mace**, R forward and grasping hair of cowering prisoner; lion also in field above prisoner / Teissier, *Egyptian Iconography*, 53, 116, 197 (no. 24).
- Newell 303 P, MB Syria / male with horned headdress, facing left, **L in Fist Up with small weapon (dagger or throwstick)**, R forward with axe and spear (blade downward); the figure strides on two mountains; sun disk in crescent above / Buchanan, *YBC*, 420-21 (no. 1212).
- Newell 310 P, MB Syria / male figure with headdress missing, facing right, **R missing but probably in Fist Up**, L forward with axe / Buchanan, *YBC*, 436-37 (no. 1275); Teissier, *Egyptian Iconography*, 82, 201 (no. 147).
- Newell 324 P, Syria / male with horned headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with rod**, L forward with axe, sickle sword, and leash to couchant bull / Buchanan, *YBC*, 414-15 (no. 1189).

¹⁰⁴ Thus Amiet. It is also possible to interpret this as a winged sun disk of which the center is overlapped by the smiting figure's head.

- Newell 327 P, Syria / male with horned headdress, facing left, **L in Fist Up with hand obscured**, L forward with axe, sickle sword, and leash to couchant bull / Buchanan, *YBC*, 414-15 (no. 1190).
- Newell 339 P, Syria / male with horned and spiked headdress, facing left, **L in Fist Up with mace**, L forward with axe / Buchanan, *YBC*, 414-15 (no. 1191).
- PBN 463 Unknown provenance / male with rounded headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with single-bladed axe**, L forward with spear pointed downward; in field before him are three lions attacking two bovines / Collon, "Aleppo Workshop," 36, 42 (no. 23).
- PBN Seyrig 108 P, MB Syria / male with horned and pointed headdress, facing left, **L in Fist Up with club**, R forward with foliated branch or rod stuck into serpent's mouth; he strides on two mountains / Teissier, *Egyptian Iconography*, 115, 205, unnumbered plate (no. 241).
- PBN Seyrig 142 P, Syria / male with horned and spiked helmet, facing left, **L in Fist Up with mace**, R forward with long-shafted weapon / Williams-Forte, "Snake and the Tree," 30, pl. 2.4; Keel, Keel-Leu, and Schroer, *Studien*, 263-65 (no. 67).
- PML NN (1) P, MB Levant / male with spiked headdress, facing left, **L in Fist Up with mace**, R forward with axe and curved instrument; he strides upon three mountains / *ANEP*, no. 224.
- Poche collection Unknown provenance / male with horned and spiked helmet, facing right, **R in Fist Up with mace**, L forward with axe, throwstick, and leash of couchant bull / Collon, "Aleppo Workshop," 36, 41 (no. 5).
- Rockefeller 34.34123 LB Lachish / male with tall headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with long-handled axe or mace**, L forward with shield / Cornelius, *ICGRB*, 94, pl. 28 (no. RM5).
- Rockefeller 35.4442 LB Bethel / male with horned headdress,¹⁰⁵ facing right, **R in Fist Up with sickle sword**, L forward with spear; opposite this figure is the goddess 'Ashtart, whose name is inscribed in hieroglyphs between the two figures / Frankfort, *CS*, pl. 44r; Parker, "Cylinder Seals," no. 180; *ANEP*, no. 468; Cornelius, *ICGRB*, 173-74, pl. 45 (no. BM7).
- Rockefeller J. 951 LB Beth-Shean / male with tall headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with long-handled axe**, L forward with shield or weapon; in front of this figure are two rampant lions facing each other / Cornelius, *ICGRB*, 93-94, pl. 28 (no. RM4).

¹⁰⁵ Some have identified this headdress as the Egyptian Blue Crown; see discussion in Cornelius, *ICGRB*, 173. From the present writer's own close examination of the published photographs, the identification as the Blue Crown does not seem likely; the headdress appears more conical than the Blue Crown, and the two horns protruding from it are clearly defined.

- YBC 12798 MB Syria / male with horned and spiked helmet, facing right, **R in Fist Up with hand obscured**, L forward with short-shafted foliated rod; winged sun disk above and in front of his head; scorpions in field before and behind him / Buchanan, *YBC*, 422-23 (no. 1222); Keel, Keel-Leu, and Schroer, *Studien*, 263-65 (no. 65).
- PLU (30) MB Ebla / male with horned and spiked helmet, facing left, **L in Fist Up with mace**, R forward with mostly-obscured object / Keel, *Symbolism of the Biblical World*, 213, fig. 290; Teissier, *Egyptian Iconography*, 97, 202 (no. 184).
- PLU (31) MB Ebla / male with horned and pointed helmet, facing left, **L in Fist Up with mace**, R forward with short, curved weapon (possibly dagger) / Teissier, *Egyptian Iconography*, 103, 203 (no. 199).
- PLU (32) MB Karum Kanesh, Kültepe, Turkey / male with no discernible headdress, facing left, **L in Fist Up with mace**, R forward with rod whose upper end bears a flower; he stands atop two bulls; bird facing left and griffin facing right in field before him / Williams-Forte, "Snake and the Tree," 40, fig. 6; Keel, Keel-Leu, and Schroer, *Studien*, 264-65 (no. 69, mislabeled on p. 279 as no. 68).
- PLU (33) MB Lefkoniko Athienica, Cyprus / male with horned and spiked headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with small and indistinct weapon**, L forward with foliated rod / Teissier, *Egyptian Iconography*, 58, 116, 198 (no. 41).
- PLU (34) MB Enkomi, Cyprus / male with horned and pointed headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with mace**, L forward with indistinct curved object / Teissier, *Egyptian Iconography*, 70, 116, 200 (no. 105).
- PLU (35) MB Vounous, Cyprus / male with horned conical headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with sickle sword or throwstick**, L forward with rod; he stands upon two mountains / Teissier, *Egyptian Iconography*, 74, 200 (no. 120).
- PLU (36) P, MB Ugarit / male with horned and spiked helmet, facing left, **L in Fist Up with mace**, R forward with curved staff¹⁰⁶ / Amiet, *SC*, 28, 31 (no. 42); Teissier, *Egyptian Iconography*, 50-51, 116, 197 (no. 9).
- PLU (37) MB-LB Ugarit / male with rounded headdress, facing left, **L in Fist Up with no weapon**,¹⁰⁷ R forward with no weapon; he faces a pair of confronted rampant lions, between which is a small gazelle / Amiet, *SC*, 36, 38 (no. 55).
- PLU (38) LB Ugarit / male with horned and spiked helmet, facing right, **R in Fist Up with mace**, L forward with indistinct object, perhaps lightning shaft / Frankfort, *CS*, pl. 45d; Amiet, *SC*, 34, 37 (no. 45).

¹⁰⁶ Amiet analyzes this object as "une très longue harpé." This seems very unlikely, since it is bent but not in a sickle shape and since the figure holds it in the middle.

¹⁰⁷ Amiet sees the forearm of the smiting figure as a mace. However, this would make the right arm disproportionately shorter than the left. What Amiet evidently takes to be a mace head at the end of the right arm is rather to be understood as the fist, rendered with a globule like the hands and paws of the other figures on this seal.

- PLU (39) LB Ugarit / male or female with no headdress, facing left, seated on Egyptian-like throne, **L in Fist Up with no weapon**, R forward with vegetation staff / Amiet, *SC*, 54, 59 (no. 100).
- PLU (40) LB Ugarit / stick figure facing left, **L in Fist Up with no apparent weapon**, R forward with no apparent weapon / Amiet, *SC*, 57, 65 (no. 137).
- PLU (41) LB Ugarit / male with indistinct headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with indistinct weapon (perhaps mace)**, L forward with branch or foliated rod / Amiet, *SC*, 74, 82 (no. 167).
- PLU (42) LB Ugarit / procession of figures facing right, including: (1) male with White Crown, **R in Fist Up with axe**, L forward with no weapon; (2) smaller male with no apparent headdress, **R in Fist Up with no apparent weapon**, L touching chest / Amiet, *SC*, 88-89, 100 (no. 191).
- PLU (43) LB Ugarit / male or female with no apparent headdress, facing left, **L in Fist Up with no apparent weapon**, R forward with rod (which perhaps has flower at top) / Amiet, *SC*, 96, 108 (no. 241).
- PLU (44) LB Ugarit / procession of males with indistinct or no headdress, facing right, or which two have **R in Fist Up with no apparent weapon**, L forward with no apparent weapon / Amiet, *SC*, 122-23, 125 (no. 286).
- PLU (45) LB Ugarit / male with pointed headdress, facing left, **L in Fist Up with no weapon**, R forward with no visible weapon;¹⁰⁸ bird in front of him, facing right; male with pointed headdress, facing left, **L in Fist Up with indistinct weapon**, R forward with spear pointing upward; caprid in front of him, facing right / Amiet, *SC*, 123, 126 (no. 290).
- PLU (46) LB Ugarit / male with no apparent headdress, facing left, **L in Fist Up with no apparent weapon**, R forward and grasping hair of cowering prisoner; male with no apparent headdress, facing right opposite the first figure, **R in Fist Up with indistinct weapon** as if to smite the cowering prisoner, L forward with no apparent weapon, / Amiet, *SC*, 123, 126 (no. 291).
- PLU (47) LB Tell Fekheryeh / male with knobbed headdress, facing left, **L in Fist Up with no weapon**, R forward with staff / Cornelius, *ICGRB*, 170, pl. 44 (no. BM1).

The variation in iconographic elements for the smiting figure on these seals is not very different from that encountered on figurines and stelae. The weapon held in the deity's upraised hand is most often a mace, but in some examples he holds an axe, sword, rod, or no weapon at all (the identification of the weapon is sometimes rendered difficult by the state of preservation or

¹⁰⁸ The space where an upright weapon would be expected is occupied by the bird's wing.

the lack of detail in the engraving). The range of headdresses is basically consistent with that of the figurines and stelae discussed above.

Cylinder seals, like the carved ivories but unlike the majority of the figurines and stelae, show the smiting figure within a larger context. The scene never approaches anything like an extended narrative. However, some examples show a target for the smiting gesture, thus providing a limited narrative context in which to view the gesture. Care must be exercised in determining which, if any, figures occupying the space in front of the smiting figure qualify as targets of the smiting gesture. The most certain examples of targets are cowering human captives whom the smiting figure grasps by the hair or wrist (Aleppo M 6339; Brussels NN; De Clercq 395; Marcopoli 442, 455; Moore 160, PLU [46]), and animals whom the smiting figure grasps by the horns or feet and whose place in the composition is similar to that of the cowering captive (Antakya 8840; Damascus NN). Several seals show other animals—scorpions, lions, bovines, caprids, and birds—in various positions or scattered in the field before the smiting figure; in these instances, it is difficult to determine whether a given animal is a target of the smiting or whether, on the contrary, it has a parallel or attribute relationship to the smiting figure.¹⁰⁹ In general, when an animal appears before the agent but is not grasped by him, we use the criteria of directionality, proximity, and the nature of the animal to judge the likelihood of the animal being a target of the gesture. For example, we would expect dangerous animals (bulls, griffins, lions, raptors, and scorpions) to face the agent in a combative relationship, and we would expect harmless animals (caprids, cows, and small birds) to face away from the agent in a pursuer-

¹⁰⁹ Those who have studied these seals vary in their interpretations of the relationship between the smiting figure and animals in the field before him. For example, Collon, in *ACS*, 36, describes the smiting figure in Antakya 8012 as “making a threatening gesture towards a lion which is attacking a standing goat and, in so doing, is leaping over a small couchant goat.” This assumes that the lion is the sole target of the gesture. By contrast, Amiet tends to interpret all of the animals in the field before the smiting figure as targets; see Amiet, *SC*, 36 (on PLU [37]), 138 (on Damascus 2834). Since neither of these interpreters present an argument on this issue, it is not certain whether their interpretations are carefully considered or impressionistic.

quarry relationship. The closer the animal is to the agent without other figures intervening, the more probable it seems that the animal is a target. Also, if there is only one animal in the field before the agent and there is no compelling reason to doubt that this animal is a target, we consider it to be a probable target. However, there remain a number of cases in which it is uncertain which, if any, of the animals in the field before the agent is a target. Seals showing possible targets for the Fist Up gesture are gathered in table 16.

Table 16. Possible Targets of Fist Up Gesture in Cylinder Seals

Seal	Figure(s) in front of agent	Relationship of figure(s) to agent
Aleppo M 6338	bovine standing on hind legs	probably target (although apparently facing away from agent; cf. caprids in Antakya 8012)
Aleppo M 6339	cowering human captive	certainly target
Antakya 7967	possibly both humans and animals (stick figures, hard to interpret with certainty)	uncertain
Antakya 8012	rampant lion facing away from agent, two caprids facing away from lion and agent	uncertain: target may be lion, caprids, or both
Antakya 8840	gazelle facing agent, its horns grasped by agent, lion facing same direction as agent pounces on gazelle from above	gazelle certainly target; lion has attacking role parallel to smiting
Antakya 9123 (= 9062, 8731, 8562)	two caprids grasped by raptor's talons	uncertain: target may be raptor, caprids, both, or neither (see below)
BM 129580	scorpion	probably target
BM 131627	human in grip of larger figure beneath smiting figure	probably target
Brussels NN	cowering human captive	certainly target
Damascus 2617	birds, griffin, scorpion, and caprid, all facing target except birds	all probably targets
Damascus 2633	scorpion, perhaps also unidentified quadruped	probably targets
Damascus 2679	fallen human figure	certainly target
Damascus 2744	scorpion	probably target
Damascus 2798	quadrupeds standing on plane perpendicular to that of agent	uncertain
Damascus 2834	bull and caprid facing away from agent	uncertain: target could be bull, caprid, or both
Damascus 2894	caprid facing toward agent	probably target
Damascus NN	quadruped (caprid or calf) held by rear feet	certainly target
De Clercq 395	cowering human captive	certainly target

Table 16, continued

Seal	Figure(s) in front of agent	Relationship of figure(s) to agent
Louvre AO 17252	caprid perpendicular to ground line, feet away from agent, but craning neck to face agent	probably target
Marcopoli 442	covering human captive	certainly target
Marcopoli 455	prone human captive	certainly target
Moore 160	covering human captive, lion also in field above prisoner, upside down and facing away from agent	human captive certainly target; lion possibly not related to this scene
Rockefeller J. 951	confronted rampant lions (cf. PLU [37])	uncertain: target could be one or both lions
YBC 12798	scorpion(s)	probably target
PLU (32)	bird facing away from agent, griffin facing agent, both close to agent	bird and griffin both probably targets
PLU (37)	confronted rampant lions (cf. Rockefeller J. 951), small gazelle between them	uncertain: target could be lions, gazelle, or both
PLU (45)	caprid and bird facing agents	probably targets
PLU (46)	covering human captives	certainly target

In the seal impression Antakya 9123 (= 9062, 8731, 8562), the raptor grasping two caprids in its talons forms a central motif, and it is flanked by two figures facing inward. The figure on the left is largely obscured but appears to be a goddess performing the Palm Sideways gesture (see below), while the figure on the right is a smiting god. One might interpret the raptor and/or the caprids as a target of the Fist Up gesture performed by the figure on the right, and the figure on the left could be seen as gesturing toward the central motif or toward the smiting god figure (in a supporting role?).¹¹⁰ However, there is no way to confirm this interpretation or even

¹¹⁰ The juxtaposition of these figures brings to mind the Ugaritic passage *KTU* 1.2 iv 11-30, in which Ba'lu engages in combat, wielding two maces in a way that is specifically compared to the swooping of a raptor, and the goddess 'Athtartu is also present. This passage is considered in connection with the smiting god motif in section 4.2.1.7 below.

to know if the arrangement of the figures on this seal has any narrative significance (rather than being purely decorative, as the symmetry of the figures may suggest).

Thus, excluding the uncertain examples, we have a small group of cylinder seals in which we can identify certain or probable targets of the Fist Up gesture: cowering human captives, birds, bovines, caprids, griffins, and scorpions. The human captives and griffins are also found as targets in other forms of the motif on other media (cf. especially the ivories discussed above and the metal bowls discussed below). Surprisingly, there are no certain examples of cylinder seal images in which lions are targets. All of these examples, however, constitute a minority of the cylinder seals. In most of the seals, human figure(s) before the smiting figure are neither cowering nor combative, but rather appear to be giving veneration to the smiting figure, placing him in a ritual context in which the smiting gesture has no explicit narrative role.¹¹¹

Aside from targets for the smiting gesture, some additional figures or elements shown on cylinder seals help to establish comparisons with the stelae and ivories that show this motif. These figures or elements include a smaller human figure who seems to be protected by the smiting figure, and mountains beneath the smiting figure's feet. Antakya 8973 shows a smaller robed figure facing the same direction as the smiting god and positioned under his left hand; this is very similar to the smaller robed figure in the "Baal au foudre" stela. Mountains beneath the smiting god's feet, which are present in BM NN, Montreal NN, Newell 303, PBN Seyrig 108, PML NN (1), and PLU (35), compare well with the "Baal au foudre" stela and with the ivories IM 65418, Tokyo 9090-1, and Tokyo 9090-3.

The smiting god motif is also known from cylinder seals that do not belong to the Syrian style. A cylinder seal from Middle Bronze Age Tell el-Dab'a in Egypt, for example, shows a

¹¹¹ Cf. Martin G. Klingbeil, "Psalms 5: Iconography," in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry and Writings*, ed. Tremper Longman III and Peter Enns (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2008), 626.

smiting god figure facing left and striding upon two mountains. He wields a mace in his upraised left hand and a fenestrated axe in his right. Many elements of this seal are similar to elements on Syrian cylinder seals, but there are also aspects that are characteristically Egyptian or that correspond to Egyptian religious concepts. Edith Porada concludes that the Tell el-Dab‘a seal “is carved in a style dependent on, but not belonging to, known Syrian cylinder seals” and “may be the product of a local seal cutter.”¹¹² Given the ambiguous cultural orientation of this seal, we exclude it from our corpus. Other styles of cylinder seals showing the same or a similar motif include the Hittite and Mittani styles, which are also excluded from our corpus.¹¹³

Another kind of seal which was prevalent in the Levant during the Middle and Late Bronze Ages was the scarab. Scarab seals and related objects showing the Fist Up gesture divide into three categories: (1) Middle Bronze Age “Hyksos scarabs” and plaques, on which are depicted Northwest Semitic motifs in “Canaanite style,” although these objects were most likely manufactured within Egypt;¹¹⁴ (2) Late Bronze Age scarabs showing the “smiting Pharaoh” motif, which are thoroughly Egyptian in both motif and manufacture technique;¹¹⁵ (3) Late Bronze Age (and later) scarabs, plaques, and amulets showing the Egyptian and Semitic-Egyptian deities Onuris, Rashap, and Ba‘lu in Egyptian style (cf. the discussion of the Egyptian

¹¹² Edith Porada, “The Cylinder Seal from Tell el-Dab‘a,” *American Journal of Archaeology*, 88 (1984): 488. Porada also suggests that the seal was “copied...from a Syrian example” (Ibid., 487). However, how much of the Tell el-Dab‘a seal was directly copied from a single Syrian example (as opposed to isolated motifs and patterns being selected from multiple sources) is a matter of speculation.

¹¹³ It may, however, be noted that seals of these other styles were certainly encountered by Northwest Semites. For example, Mittani-style cylinders showing the smiting god motif have been found at Ugarit: see Amiet, *SC*, 75, 83 (no. 171); *ibid.*, 76, 84 (no. 176).

¹¹⁴ Raphael Giveon, *Egyptian Scarabs from Western Asia from the Collections of the British Museum* (OBO, Series Archaeologica 3; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1985), 14.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.* Scarab seals of this category are collected with complete photographs, drawings, basic information, and commentary in Othmar Keel, *Corpus der Stempelsiegel-Amulette aus Palästina/Israel: Von den Anfängen bis zur Perserzeit*, 4 vols. (OBO 10, 13, 29, 31; Fribourg: Academic Press, 1995-2010). See, in particular, Katalog vol. 1 (= OBO 13), 248-49 (no. 429), 522-23 (no. 1234), 558-59 (no. 81); vol. 2, 46-47 (no. 11), 106-7 (no. 23), 118-19 (no. 47), 406-7 (no. 10), 478-79 (no. 34); vol. 3, 134-35 (no. 245), 270-71 (no. 566), 306-7 (no. 652), 362-63 (no. 792), 404-5 (no. 896), 418-19 (no. 936). See also Othmar Keel, Hildi Keel-Leu, and Silvia Schroer, *Studien zu den Stempelsiegeln aus Palästina/Israel*, vol. 2 (Fribourg and Göttingen: Universitätsverlag and Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989), 304-7.

Rashap stelae above).¹¹⁶ It is mainly the first category that concerns us here, since only the Hyksos scarabs seem to belong comfortably within the tradition of Levantine art as defined in this chapter and thus to shed direct light on Northwest Semitic culture. Scarabs of the other two categories are not included in our corpus proper, as they bear direct witness not to the Levantine smiting god motif but to Egyptian forms of the motif; these scarabs are, however, useful in showing various forms of the smiting motif that were circulating among Northwest Semitic populations in the Late Bronze Age Levant.

Examples of Hyksos scarabs and plaques have been excavated at Gezer, Lachish, Jerusalem, Jericho, Tell el-‘Ajjul, and Emmaus. In addition, there are a couple of unprovenanced examples. The relevant data are shown in the list below.

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Gitbud collection
NN (Munich) | plaque, P, MB, Unknown provenance / recto: male with pointed headdress, facing right, R in Fist Up with no visible weapon , L forward with scepter whose head bears blooming lotus flower; uraei in field behind figure and between his legs; verso: figure with no distinct headdress, facing right, R in Fist Up with no visible weapon , L forward with foliated staff whose head bears blooming flower; two other figures on verso assume similar poses ¹¹⁷ / Keel, Keel-Leu, and Schroer, <i>Studien</i> , 264, 266 (no. 73); Cornelius, <i>ICGRB</i> , 257, fig. 63. |
| Istanbul NN (4) | scarab, MB Gezer / male with tall headdress, facing right, R in Fist Up with empty fist , L forward with foliated branch / Macalister, <i>Excavation of Gezer</i> , 2:318 (no. 144); vol. 3, pl. 206.44; Keel, Keel-Leu, and Schroer, <i>Studien</i> , 264, 266 (no. 71). |

¹¹⁶ The scarabs, plaques, and amulets belonging to this third category occasionally bear inscriptions, which are uniformly Egyptian in script and language. Geographically, many come from the Levant, but some come from Egypt. For examples, see Cornelius, *ICGRB*, pls. 28 (nos. RM7-RM13), 44 (no. BM1a), 47 (no. BM15); Givon, *ESWA*, 102-3 (no. 123), 162-63 (no. 6); Keel, *Corpus I*, 36-37 (no. 43), 290-91 (no. 554); Keel, *Corpus II*, 242-43 (no. 56), 508-9 (no. 40).

¹¹⁷ Keel, Keel-Leu, and Schroer interpret the last two figures on the verso as “zwei Tänzer...die die Ankunft des Wettergottes enthusiastisch feiern” and the first figure on the verso as “ein Verehrer, der mit Blume in der Hand und erhobenen Arm die Haltung des Gottes imitiert.” Keel, Keel-Leu, and Schroer, *Studien*, 264. The god they refer to here is presumably the figure depicted on the recto.

- Rockefeller
36.1614 scarab, MB Lachish¹¹⁸ / male with tall headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with empty fist**, L forward with no visible weapon; before him are two uraei, one above his L and facing left, the other under his L and facing right / Tufnell, Inge, and Harding, *Lachish II*, 68-69, pl. 32.1.
- Rockefeller
47.590 scarab, MB Tell el-‘Ajjul / male with tall headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with no visible weapon**, L forward with foliated branch¹¹⁹ / Keel, Keel-Leu, and Schroer, *Studien*, 264, 266 (no. 70); Keel, *Corpus I*, 458-59 (no. 1041).
- Sydney NN scarab, MB Jericho / male with no headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with short weapon shaft**, L forward with no visible weapon¹²⁰ / Kenyon, *Excavations at Jericho*, 2:621, 623, fig. 292.20; Olga Tufnell, *Studies on Scarab Seals*, 2/2, nos. 1703, 2730.
- PLU (48) scarab, MB, Unknown provenance / male with no headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with empty fist**, L forward with *was* scepter whose lower half is foliated / Keel, Keel-Leu, and Schroer, *Studien*, 264, 266 (no. 74).
- PLU (49) plaque, MB Jerusalem / male with White Crown, facing right, **R in Fist Up with empty fist**, L forward with staff whose head bears blooming lotus flower / Saller, *Dominus Flevit*, 187 fig. 64.1, 191-92; pl. 38.1; Keel, Keel-Leu, and Schroer, *Studien*, 264, 266 (no. 72).
- PLU (50) scarab, MB Emmaus / male with tall headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with empty fist**, L forward with foliated branch; uraeus between foreleg and lower part of branch, facing right / Keel, *Corpus II*, 558-59 (no. 1).

In general, the attributes of the deity shown on these scarab seals and plaques is in keeping with those of the Syrian-style cylinder seals. Two major differences, however, may be mentioned.

First, the deity in the Hyksos scarabs and plaques uniformly faces right. Second, almost all of the Hyksos scarabs and plaques show the deity with no weapon in his upraised fist. The lone exception to this is Sydney NN, on which the deity is shown raising a weapon whose exact type is uncertain due to the fact that it extends beyond the border of the seal. These two differences

¹¹⁸ This scarab was found in the “Fosse Temple” at Lachish, which belongs to the Late Bronze Age; however, the scarab itself is certainly of Hyksos type and is thus of an earlier date than the temple in which it was found. Cf. Olga Tufnell, Charles H. Inge, and Lankester Harding, *Lachish II: The Fosse Temple* (London: Oxford University Press, 1940), 20-22, 68-69.

¹¹⁹ The left hand extends beyond the field border, but the inner leaves of the branch are represented along the border.

¹²⁰ Both the left hand and the weapon in the right extend beyond the border of the seal.

are likely attributable to a higher degree of iconographic standardization in the Hyksos scarabs and plaques compared to the Syrian cylinder seals of this period.

A scarab seal from Middle Bronze Age Tell el-Dab‘a shows a male figure wearing the Egyptian Red Crown, facing right, his right hand in Fist Up with a mace, his left hand forward with a foliated branch.¹²¹ Some elements of the iconography of this seal, such as a pair of fish flanking the smiting figure, are strange compared to other examples that are more clearly Northwest Semitic. This seal, like the cylinder seal from Tell el-Dab‘a discussed above, is excluded from our corpus because of its ambiguous cultural orientation, although it is useful for comparison.

Iron Age glyptic art showing the Fist Up gesture consists solely of stamp seals and their impressions on bullae. Examples of Iron Age stamp seals have been found in controlled excavations at Ekron, Tell el-Far‘ah South, Tel Dor, Beth Shean, Tell Beit Mirsim, Beth Guvrin, and Atlit. However, many of the relevant seals, especially for the Iron Age II period, come from illicit excavations and the antiquities trade. Three types of Iron Age stamp seals are included in our corpus: (1) those from the Iron Age I (ca. 1200-1000 BCE), (2) those from the Iron Age II (ca. 1000-586 BCE), and (3) those from the Persian Period (539-332 BCE). These types are clearly distinguishable by their shapes, their materials, the skill with which they are executed, and their iconographic features.

Stamp seals from the Iron Age I are of a variety of shapes, are generally of non-precious stone (such as limestone), are generally crude in design and execution, and are uninscribed. The majority of the seals and bullae from this period come from controlled excavations in the southern Levant.

¹²¹ First published in Keel, Keel-Leu, and Schroer, *Studien*, 264, 266 (no. 75).

- IAA 48-630 limestone scarab, Iron I Achzib / male or female with no discernible headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with no discernible weapon**, L forward and grasping scorpion or large bovine head / Keel, *Corpus I*, 40-41 (no. 58).
- IAA 73-123 steatite scarab, Iron I Akko / procession of two human figures on animals, all facing right: male or female with no headdress, **R in Fist Up with no discernible weapon**, L forward; he or she stands on long-horned caprid; behind them is male or female with drawn bow, standing on caprid or lion / Keel, *Corpus I*, 560-61 (no. 86).
- JAI NN bulla bearing small seal impression, Iron I Ekron / procession of two human figures on animals, all facing left: male or female with no discernible headdress, **L in Fist Up with no discernible weapon**, R forward; he or she stands on horned animal, probably caprid; behind them is male or female with no discernible headdress, **R in Fist Up (though in front of head instead of behind it) with no discernible weapon**, L lowered; he or she stands on indistinct animal, perhaps lion / Keel, *Corpus II*, 550-51 (no. 70).
- Manchester 8857 limestone scarab, Iron I Tell el-Far‘ah South / male or female with no discernible headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with no discernible weapon**, L forward; large quadruped (perhaps dog of disproportionate size) beneath first figure’s foremost foot / Keel, *Corpus III*, 374-75 (no. 823).
- Tel Dor
Excavation
storage 92583 steatite scarab, Iron I Tel Dor / procession of two human figures on animals, all facing right: male or female with no discernible headdress, both arms lowered; he or she stands on horned animal, probably gazelle; behind them is male or female with no discernible headdress, **R in Fist Up with no discernible weapon**, L raised and having appearance of wing; he or she stands on long-tailed animal, probably lion / Keel, *Corpus II*, 474-75 (no. 27).
- UPenn 34-20-58 stone conoid stamp seal, Iron I Beth Shean / male or female with no discernible headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with empty hand or indistinct weapon**,¹²² L forward with staff or long forearm pointed downward; he stands on quadruped (probably lion); behind first figure is smaller figure, of whom directionality and features are indistinct / Keel, *Corpus II*, 120-21 (no. 53).
- PLU (51) limestone finger ring, Iron I Tell Beit Mirsim / male or female with no discernible headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with indistinct weapon**, L forward with staff; quadruped (perhaps caprid) in field directly behind him / Keel, *Corpus II*, 62-63 (no. 42).

¹²² The level of detail on this seal is very low, so it is difficult to tell whether the extremity of the raised arm is the figure’s forearm or a weapon.

Stamp seals from the Iron Age II are predominantly of scaraboid shape, may be of non-precious or semiprecious stone, and show scenes that are generally of better design and execution than those depicted on the Iron Age I seals. Many of the seals of this period bear short inscriptions in linear alphabetic script. Unlike the Iron I seals, all of the Iron Age II seals showing the smiting god motif have been acquired on the antiquities market; their date is generally determined on the basis of the iconography, design features, and paleography. None of these examples have, to our knowledge, been singled out as suspected forgeries.

- BLM 1099g Unknown provenance / male with no headdress, facing left, **R in Fist Up (though in front of head instead of behind it) with plant-like object** (possibly doubling as letter Kaph in accompanying inscription),¹²³ L forward with *ankh*-like object; he stands upon lion / Avigad, *Corpus*, 414-15 (no. 1098).
- Haifa REH-041 P, Iron II Levant / male with Double Crown, facing right, **R in Fist Up with spear**, L forward and grasping hair of cowering captive into whose face he is ready to thrust spear¹²⁴ / Avigad, *Corpus*, 314 (no. 840).
- IAA 69-5739 Iron II Akko / male with indistinct headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with mace**, L forward and grasping cowering captive by the hair / Keel, *Corpus I*, 610-11 (no. 226).
- IAA J. 894 P, Iron II near Jerusalem / male with no headdress, facing left, **L in Fist Up with spear** poised to thrust into upturned mouth of griffin, R forward and grasping head crest of griffin / Avigad, *Corpus*, 110-11 (no. 198).
- PBN de Clercq 2506 P, Iron II near Amrit / male with Double Crown, facing right, **R in Fist Up with hammer**,¹²⁵ L forward and grasping she-wolf by ears; she-wolf faces left and is in leaping pose; underneath she-wolf are four human children suckling at its teats / Avigad, *Corpus*, 278-79 (no. 749).

¹²³ Avigad and Sass describe the figure as “gesturing with empty hands, while in front...an ankh-like mace(?) and a star are depicted,” but “alternatively he could be holding the ankh-like device in one hand and a plant(?) in the other.” This “plant(?)” is shaped like the Phoenician or Aramaic letter Kaph and could also, according to Avigad and Sass, be the last letter of the inscription, *lšdyrk*. See Avigad, *Corpus*, 415.

¹²⁴ Avigad and Sass interpret the scene as “Pharaoh smiting kneeling enemy” (Avigad, *Corpus*, 314). However, the motif is clearly appropriated here into a Northwest Semitic context, including many un-Egyptian features such as a robe decorated with drill-holes, a star in the field above the prisoner, and an Aramaic inscription (cf. Avigad, *Corpus*, 314: “The king’s fine robe...is un-Egyptian and may point to Babylonian inspiration”). The figure may therefore be a deity rather than the Pharaoh (cf. the cylinder seals in which the storm god smites cowering prisoners, discussed above).

¹²⁵ The weapon is indistinct enough to leave some room for reinterpretation; Avigad and Sass describe it as a “hammer or hammer-axe.”

- PLU (52) P, Iron II near Jerusalem / male figure with no headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with indistinct weapon (rod or mace)**, L forward with most of arm obscured; standing captive in front of first figure, facing right, arms bound behind him¹²⁶ / Avigad, *Corpus*, 170 (no. 400).
- PLU (53) P, Iron II near Samaria / male figure with no headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with indistinct weapon (rod or mace)**, L forward with hand on head of (and perhaps grasping hair of) standing captive who faces right with arms bound behind him¹²⁷ / Avigad, *Corpus*, 170-71 (no. 401).
- PLU (54)¹²⁸ Iron II Akko / male with falcon head and double-feathered headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with no discernible weapon**, L forward with short rod held at bottom / Keel, *Corpus I*, 600-601 (no. 199).

One is tempted to include in this group a seal inscribed with the name *pdh*, which shows an anthropomorphic figure with wings and a falcon head, his hands positioned in a way similar to BLM 1099g.¹²⁹ Avigad and Sass describe the object in this figure's upraised right hand as a mace and that in the lowered left hand as an "ankh with globular head."¹³⁰ However, the figure on this seal is extremely close to the winged anthropomorphic figures shown on some Nimrud ivories,¹³¹ and it seems likely that the objects in the hands of the falcon-headed figure on the *pdh* seal, like those in the hands of the Nimrud figures, are lotuses. It would seem, then, that these pieces show a motif separate from that of the smiting god.

Finally, seven seals and impressions of the Persian period come from a few locales, especially from excavations at Atlit. The seals are of semiprecious materials (blue-green glass, greenstone, and carnelian) and are all shaped as scarabs. The iconography of these seals and impressions shows general continuity with the Iron Age II examples, although the one from Beth

¹²⁶ Avigad and Sass interpret the scene as "soldier leading naked(?) captive" (Avigad, *Corpus*, 170), but this scene showing a figure with upraised weapon standing behind a bound figure is more conducive to an interpretation as a smiting scene.

¹²⁷ As with the preceding seal, Avigad and Sass interpret this as "soldier leading captive" (Avigad, *Corpus*, 170), but it rather appears to be a smiting scene.

¹²⁸ Formerly in Haifa, but subsequently stolen according to Keel, *Corpus I*, 600.

¹²⁹ Avigad, *Corpus*, 143 (no. 320).

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ Mallowan, *Nimrud*, 2:544, 555, 556.

Guvrin is different in the style of representation, and the five from Atlit show some innovative features that are apparently due to Greek influence (see below).

- BM WAA 102736 scaraboid, Persian Period Beth Guvrin / male with no discernible headdress, facing left, **L in Fist Up with single-bladed axe**, R forward and grasping hair of cowering captive who faces left / Keel, *Corpus* II, 36-37 (no. 3).
- IAA 73-203 clay bulla, Persian Period Akko / male with pointed headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with double-bladed axe**, L forward with spear and shield / Keel, *Corpus* I, 532-33 (no. 5).
- Rockefeller 32.497 scarab, Persian Period Atlit / male with cap or headband but otherwise nude, facing left, **L in Fist Up with club**, R forward with bow; both legs are flexed to an acute angle, as if he is kneeling or running / Keel, *Corpus* I, 760-61 (no. 5); Klingbeil, *Yahweh Fighting*, 178, fig. 10.
- Rockefeller 32.687 scarab, Persian Period Atlit / male wearing lion skin, facing right, **R in Fist Up with club**, L forward and grasping lion by its hind leg / Keel, *Corpus* I, 764-65 (no. 15).
- Rockefeller 32.705 scarab, Persian Period Atlit / male wearing lion skin on head but otherwise nude, facing left, **L in Fist Up with club**, R forward and grasping lion by its hind leg / Keel, *Corpus* I, 764-65 (no. 16).
- PLU (55)¹³² scarab, Persian Period Atlit / male wearing lion skin, facing left, **L in Fist Up with club**, R forward and grasping lion by its hind leg / Keel, *Corpus* I, 758-59 (no. 4); Klingbeil, *Yahweh Fighting*, 177-78, fig. 9.
- PLU (56)¹³³ scarab, Persian Period Atlit / male with cap and wearing lion skin, facing left, **L in Fist Up with club**, R forward with bow / Avigad, *Corpus*, 291 (no. 777); Keel, *Corpus* I, 760-61 (no. 8); Klingbeil, *Yahweh Fighting*, 176-77, fig. 8.

The last four pieces, all from Atlit, form a coherent subgroup, depicting a male figure wearing a lion skin but otherwise nude, wielding a club. This figure has been identified with the Greek Herakles;¹³⁴ however, the cultural orientation of these seals appears to be Northwest Semitic rather than Greek. Avigad and Sass classify the seal PLU (56) as “Aramaic” based on the paleography of the inscription, commenting that “it is unusual to have an Aramaic inscription

¹³² Formerly Rockefeller 32.496, lost in 1967, according to Keel, *Corpus* I, 758.

¹³³ Formerly IAA 32.552, lost in 1967, according to Avigad, *Corpus*, 291.

¹³⁴ Avigad, *Corpus*, 291; Keel, *Corpus* I, 764.

on a scarab of Phoenician provenance with a Greek motif.”¹³⁵ Further, although some of the smiting figure’s attributes (specifically the lion skin and the club) point to the iconography of Herakles, the smiting god motif is not strictly Greek but rather has a long history in Northwest Semitic iconography, as the present study demonstrates. Klingbeil points out that the head of the figure on PLU (56) “seems to betray its Phoenician origin,” and he argues that the holding of the lion by its hind leg and other aspects in PLU (55) not only place this seal within the Phoenician iconographic tradition but also serve to associate Herakles with the Northwest Semitic gods Ba‘lu and Rashap, in keeping with the syncretistic tendencies of Phoenician art at this period.¹³⁶ The adaptation of Greek elements to a Phoenician context in these seals recalls the adaptation of Egyptian and other foreign motifs in the Levantine artistic tradition of the Late Bronze Age, as discussed above. Because the contextualizing tradition in these instances is Northwest Semitic, we accept these seals as indicative of Northwest Semitic culture at this period and include them in our corpus.

Some of the stamp seals which show the Fist Up gesture and which Avigad and Sass classify as “Aramaic” on the basis of their inscriptions are firmly within the Mesopotamian iconographic tradition; neither their provenance nor any aspect of their style argues for a Northwest Semitic cultural orientation.¹³⁷ These seals show an *ugallu* or “weather-demon” in

¹³⁵ Avigad, *Corpus*, 291.

¹³⁶ Klingbeil, *Yahweh Fighting from Heaven*, 176-78.

¹³⁷ See Avigad, *Corpus*, 284 (no. 758), 300 (no. 802), 315 (no. 845). All three of these seals are of unknown provenance, but one of them (no. 845) was purchased in Iraq. Two of the names on these seals are of uncertain reading, while the other (no. 802) bears an “Aramaic” name (*klbydšmš*, “Everything is in the hand of Shamash”) which has an exact Akkadian parallel (*Gabbi-ina-qāte-Šamaš*; cf. Avigad, *Corpus*, 507-8). Also see Tallay Ornan, “The Mesopotamian Influence on West Semitic Inscribed Seals: A Preference for the Depiction of Mortals,” in *Studies in the Iconography of Northwest Semitic Inscribed Seals*, ed. Benjamin Sass and Chritoph Uehlinger (Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 125; Fribourg and Göttingen: University Press and Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1993), 52-73. According to Ornan’s system of classification, the three seals in question belong to a group of “Mesopotamian seals” that “originated mainly in Mesopotamia and were used by the West Semitic population that lived in this region, or by Mesopotamians in the West” (ibid., 52). The three seals show all the characteristics of this “Mesopotamian” group, which include the following: (1) the inscription being exclusively in Aramaic, (2) the

Fist Up with a short and indistinct weapon, sometimes as part of a procession including an *ilu bīti* or “household god” who performs the same gesture with an empty fist.¹³⁸ The only Northwest Semitic aspect of these seals is the fact that they bear inscriptions in the Aramaic language and script, and this is not especially indicative of Northwest Semitic cultural orientation, since Aramaic was a *lingua franca* among the various populations of the Near East during this period. Therefore, these seals are not included in our corpus proper, although they provide useful data for comparison.

4.2.5. Metal Bowls Showing Figures in Fist Up

The last major type of art object on which the Fist Up gesture is depicted is that of Phoenician bronze and silver bowls. The majority of these bowls, worked with designs in beautiful *repoussé* technique, come from controlled excavations at Nimrud and at sites in Italy, the Aegean, and Cyprus. Only a couple of the examples are of unknown provenance. A good deal of discussion has surrounded these bowls, particularly with regard to their cultural origin. Those who have studied these bowls, notably Perrot and Markoe, have convincingly argued that their manufacture, motifs, and overall designs are entirely Phoenician.¹³⁹ The motifs include elements derived from Egypt and Mesopotamia as well as some carried over from the Bronze Age Levant (including some motifs found on metal bowls of the “international style”), but all are blended together and incorporated into a coherent style of composition. A few examples bear

inscription being cut haphazardly or squeezed into the composition, and (3) the seal being of rounded or faceted conoidal shape (*ibid.*, 53).

¹³⁸ Ornan, “Mesopotamian Influence,” 56-57.

¹³⁹ Georges Perrot, *History of Art in Phoenicia and Its Dependencies* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1885), 2:338-41; Glenn Markoe, *Phoenician Bronze and Silver Bowls from Cyprus and the Mediterranean* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985), 6-8; Glenn Markoe, *Phoenicians* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000), 148-50.

short inscriptions in Phoenician, Aramaic, or Cypriote.¹⁴⁰ The types of figures performing the Fist Up gesture on these bowls are as diverse as the origins of the bowls' motifs. The list below gives the examples without differentiating the types of figures, but these types are discussed further below.

- Athens NM 7941 Iron II Olympia / Outer frieze: male with pointed headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with sword**¹⁴¹ poised to drive into upturned beak of griffin, L forward and grasping head crest of griffin; on other side of griffin is second male figure, facing left, pointing spear at griffin's chest / Perrot, *History of Art*, 2:355-56 (fig. 274); Moscati, *World*, 73-74 (fig. 22); Markoe, *Bowls*, 204-5, 316-19 (no. G3).
- BM 123053 Iron II Amathus / Outer frieze: male with no discernible headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with spear**, L holding shield; he is in turret of fortress that is being attacked by advancing rows of infantry, archers, and cavalry / Perrot, *History of Art*, 2:348-53 (fig. 271); Harden, *Phoenicians*, 187-88 (fig. 53); Moscati, *World*, 70-71 (fig. 19); Markoe, *Bowls*, 172-74, 248-49 (no. Cy4).
- BM Cat. of Bronzes 186 Iron II Salamis (Cyprus) / Center medallion: male with no headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with mace**, L forward and holding cowering captives by their hair / Markoe, *Bowls*, 174-75, 251 (no. Cy5); Philip J. King and Lawrence E. Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 356, fig. 222.
- MFA 27.170 Iron II, Unknown provenance / Middle frieze: male with no headdress, facing left, **L in Fist Up with spear** aimed at mouth of lion which faces him, F forward with shield / Markoe, *Bowls*, 199-200, 304-6 (no. E11).
- Delphi 4463 Iron II Delphi / Outer frieze: male figure with no headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with mace**,¹⁴² L forward with bow; in front is another male figure, facing right, drawing bow and resting left foot on head of fallen human figure; cartouche with decorative lines above; the two right-facing figures advance on building defended by figures drawing bows / Markoe, *Bowls*, 205-6, 320-23 (no. G4).

¹⁴⁰ Markoe, *Bowls*, nos. G6, E1, E10 (Phoenician); G3, U3 (Aramaic); and Cy6, Cy8, Cy11, Cy14, Cy22 (Cypriote). Despite the strong Egyptian influence on the iconography of these bowls, hieroglyphic "inscriptions" that appear on them appear to be nonsensical and purely decorative.

¹⁴¹ Markoe, *Bowls*, 204, describes this weapon as a "lance," but it is quite plainly a sword. The pommel is clearly shown, and the blade is broad and gradually tapers to a point, rather than having a thin shaft with a broad point like the weapon held by the second human figure in this scene.

¹⁴² Here we follow Markoe, who describes the weapon as "a large mace" (Markoe, *Bowls*, 205). However, the bulge at the end of the weapon is indistinct in the photograph, raising the possibility that the weapon is really a rod or an axe.

- Louvre AO
20134 Iron II Idalion / Center medallion: male with *atef* crown, facing right, **R in Fist Up with mace**, L forward and holding cowering captives by their hair; winged sun disk above, hovering Horus falcon to the right. Outer frieze (twice): male with no headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up (elbow at acute angle, fist close to face) with sword**, L forward and holding paw of rampant lion; sword poised to be driven into lion's chest. Outer frieze (twice): male with no headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up (elbow at acute angle, fist close to face) with sword**, L forward and holding head crest of griffin; sword poised to be driven into griffin's upturned beak / Perrot, *History of Art*, 2:348-49 (fig. 270); Harden, *Phoenicians*, 188, pl. 46; Moscati, *World*, 72-73 (fig. 21); Markoe, *Bowls*, 170-71, 244-45 (no. Cy2).
- Louvre AO
20135 Iron II Idalion / Middle frieze: two alternating scenes, the first repeated five times and the second repeated six times: (1) four-winged male with short headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with sword** poised to drive into rampant lion's chest, L forward with fist holding lion's paw; (2) male with no headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with sword** poised to drive into upturned beak of griffin, L forward and grasping head-crest of griffin; the human figure's front leg is flexed to an acute angle, knee pushing into griffin, with both feet resting on unequal mounds / Perrot, *History of Art*, 2:353-54 (fig. 272); Markoe, *Bowls*, 169-70, 242-43 (no. Cy1).
- MMA
74.51.4554 Iron II Kourion / Center medallion: four-winged male with short headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with sword** poised to drive into rampant lion's chest, L forward with fist apparently holding cord attached to lion's mouth. Outer frieze: series of scenes, including two with Fist Up: (1) male with *atef* crown, facing right, **R in Fist Up with mace**, L forward and holding bow, also holding cowering captives by their hair; (2) male with no headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with sword** poised to drive into upturned beak of griffin, L forward and grasping head-crest of griffin; his front leg is flexed to an acute angle, with foot resting on small superimposed mountains, knee pushing into griffin / Perrot, *History of Art*, 2:358-59 (fig. 276); Moscati, *World*, 71-72 (fig. 20); Markoe, *Bowls*, 177-79, 256-59 (no. Cy8).
- MMA
74.51.4556 Iron II Kourion / Center medallion: male with *atef* crown, facing right, **R in Fist Up with mace**, L forward and holding cowering captives by their hair. Middle frieze: traces of male without distinct headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with indistinct weapon (probably mace or single-bladed axe)**, L forward and grasping target (mostly lost) by its hair or tail. Outer frieze: male with pointed headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with single-bladed axe**, L forward and grasping ape-like creature by its hair; this scene is in context of "Ape Hunt" narrative / Markoe, *Bowls*, 177, 254-55 (no. Cy7).
- MMA
74.51.4559 Iron II Cyprus / Center medallion: four-winged male with head missing, facing right, **R missing but probably in Fist Up**, L forward and grasping lion by its tail; the human figure's front leg is flexed to an acute angle, foot resting on smaller lion / Markoe, *Bowls*, 184, 266 (no. Cy17).

- PMPP Dutuit 170 Iron II Pontecagnano / Center medallion: male with no headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with mace**, L forward and holding covering captives by their hair; Horus falcon hovers above / Markoe, *Bowls*, 198-99, 303 (no. E10).
- RMVG 61565 Iron II Praeneste, Bernardini Tomb / Center medallion: bound captive; male with no headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with spear**, L forward and grasping arm of another captive, who faces right and into whose leg the first figure drives spear; hound bites heel of second captive; covering figure in exergue below ground line, together with second dog which bites this covering figure's heel. Outer frieze: male with pointed headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with single-bladed axe**, L forward and holding bow, also grasping ape-like creature by its hair; this scene is in context of "Ape Hunt" narrative / Perrot, *History of Art*, 2:342-46 (fig. 267); Harden, *Phoenicians*, 188, 190 (fig. 55); Markoe, *Bowls*, 191, 278-83 (no. E2).
- RMVG 61574 Iron II Praeneste, Bernardini Tomb / Center medallion: male with no headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with mace**, L forward and holding bow, also holding covering captives by their hair; Horus falcon hovers above / Harden, *Phoenicians*, 188-89 (fig. 54); Moscati, *World*, 74-75 (fig. 23); Markoe, *Bowls*, 188-91, 274-77 (no. E1).
- Vatican 20367 Iron II Caere / Center medallion: male figure with no headdress, facing right, **R missing but probably in Fist Up**, L forward and grasping cords that bind arms of covering captive; Horus falcon hovers overhead / Markoe, *Bowls*, 196-97, 294-95 (no. E7).
- Vatican 20368 Iron II Caere / Middle frieze: male with no headdress, facing left, **L in Fist Up with spear** aimed at chest of lion, F forward with shield; lion faces first figure and strides over second human figure who lies prostrate / Perrot, *History of Art*, 2:346-48 (fig. 268); Markoe, *Bowls*, 194-96, 292-93 (no. E6).
- PLU (57) Iron II, Unknown provenance / Outer frieze: male with long headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with spear** pointed diagonally downward, L forward and grasping stem of blooming lotus / Markoe, *Bowls*, 218-19, 350-51 (no. U8).
- PLU (58) Iron II Nimrud / Outer frieze: male with no headdress, facing right, **R in Fist Up with spear**, L forward and grasping neck of rampant lion / Markoe, *Bowls*, 357 (no. Comp. 3).

The figures that perform the Fist Up gesture on these bowls show a variety of iconographic features, corresponding to the multiple origins from which forms of the motif are derived; however, the similar way in which they are incorporated into larger motifs and into the overall compositions of these bowls accentuates the figures' similarities. Markoe draws a sharp

distinction between what he calls the “vanquishing pharaoh” motif derived from Egyptian art and the four-winged genius derived from Assyrian art.¹⁴³ The former typically wields a mace, while the latter typically wields a straight sword. The gesture of the winged genius is also slightly different, with the hand closer to the body, the elbow at an acute angle rather than approximately to the square. To be sure, there are some easily identifiable examples of each of these two motifs.¹⁴⁴ However, aside from these few examples, it is not easy to apply the distinction consistently. Other examples have characteristic features of both motifs, like those on the outer frieze of Louvre AO 20134: two alternating men, both without wings and in Egypto-Canaanite clothing, one driving a sword into a lion’s chest and the other driving a sword into the upturned mouth of a griffin (cf. an example on a stamp seal, IAA J. 894). In the middle frieze of Vatican 20368 is another combined form: a man without wings, wearing Egypto-Canaanite clothing, spearing a lion with his arm upraised approximately to the square in Fist Up. A different combined form is found in the outer frieze of RMVG 61565: a man in thoroughly Mesopotamian dress grasping his victim’s hair (together with a bow) in his left hand while raising his right hand in Fist Up with an axe. Moreover, in MMA 74.51.4554, the central medallion, which is more often occupied with the “vanquishing Pharaoh” motif, shows a winged genius spearing a lion, and two Horus falcons hover above and behind the genius, just as a Horus falcon typically hovers by the smiting figure in the “vanquishing Pharaoh” motif. It is therefore clear that, whatever the origins of these motifs, the Phoenician tradition has merged them by combining their characteristic features and contextual elements, so that they seem to be functionally equivalent. As Markoe recognizes, all of these figures on the bowls convey the same basic idea

¹⁴³ Markoe, *Bowls*, 45-49.

¹⁴⁴ “Vanquishing pharaoh”: Markoe, *Bowls*, nos. Cy2, Cy5, Cy7, Cy8, E1, E7, and E10. Assyrian winged genius: Cy1, Cy8, and Cy11.

of divine victory over chaos.¹⁴⁵ The combining of elements among these figures on the bowls is generally similar to what we see in the stamp seals and, perhaps to a lesser extent, in other forms of Northwest Semitic art during this period. In view of these considerations, our corpus includes all of the figures from the Phoenician bowls that are shown performing the Fist Up gesture (including the variant of the gesture with the elbow at an acute angle), regardless of the iconographic origins of the figures.¹⁴⁶

It is particularly noteworthy that the figure in Fist Up, in almost every case, has an explicit target. The one exception to this is PLU (56), in which the figure in Fist Up faces a standing mummiform figure that does not appear to be hostile and is definitely not cowering. In the rest of the examples, the target is either an animal (lion, ape, or griffin), a human captive, or a group of cowering captives. The range of targets accords quite well with the evidence we have seen from gyptic art.

Unlike any form of art that we have presented so far, the bowls furnish at least one example of an extended narrative in which the Fist Up gesture occurs. This is the so-called “Ape Hunt” narrative shown in the outer frieze of MMA 74.51.4556 and RMVG 61565. The narrative consists of nine scenes arranged in a counterclockwise or right-to-left sequence:¹⁴⁷

First scene:	A warrior in a chariot drawn by two horses, departing from his fortified town
Second scene:	The warrior, having dismounted, shooting a stag with an arrow
Third scene:	The warrior, still on foot, chasing the bleeding stag over a mountain

¹⁴⁵ Markoe, *Bowls*, 46.

¹⁴⁶ There is one type of figure whose gesture superficially resembles Fist Up but which is excluded because it departs so radically from the figures we have encountered so far and because the resemblance to the Fist Up gesture may be coincidental. This figure is a rider on horseback who lifts his or her right hand with a whip or cudgel (Markoe, *Bowls*, nos. Cy1, E9, E11). That the action is related at all to the smiting god motif seems unlikely; instead, it is probably a spurring of the horse that is depicted. For this motif, cf. also the stamp seal shown in Keel, *Corpus I*, 562-63 (no. 93).

¹⁴⁷ Cf. M. Clermont-Ganneau, *L'imagerie phénicienne et la mythologie iconologique chez les grecs, Ire partie: La coupe phénicienne de Palestrina* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1880), x-xii, 16-39; Hans G. Güterbock, “Narration in Anatolian, Syrian, and Assyrian Art,” *American Journal of Archaeology* 61/1 (1957): 69-70.

- Fourth scene: The warrior skinning the stag while his companion tends the horses
- Fifth scene: The warrior seated on a throne, looking on as a burnt offering ascends from an altar; a winged sun disk and a moon crescent hovering above the altar
- Sixth scene: A humanoid creature (perhaps an ape) attacking as the winged sun disk, now with outstretched arms, protects/ transports the warrior and his chariot
- Seventh scene: The warrior in his chariot running down the humanoid creature
- Eighth scene: The warrior about to smite the humanoid creature
- Ninth scene: The warrior returning to the town in his chariot

The Fist Up gesture occurs in the second-to-last scene, in which the hero is about to vanquish the humanoid creature. Unfortunately, the identity of this creature is unknown, although the literature on this piece tends to identify it as an ape.

4.2.6. Engraved Bronze Axe Head

In addition to metal figurines, stone reliefs, carved ivories, glyptic art, and metal bowls, there is one remaining example of Levantine art that shows the smiting god motif. This is an engraved bronze axe head, purchased on the antiquities market and now in the Beirut National Museum (Beirut 4046), which shows a female figure with an elaborate horned *atef* crown, wearing a long robe that reaches to the ankles, facing to the right in a striding and smiting pose. She holds a dagger in her upraised right fist, while her left hand holds in front of her a short, round-headed instrument (perhaps a mirror). Facing this figure on both sides are male figures who kneel on one knee and perform the gesture of Palms Out (for this gesture, see below).¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁸ Seeden, *Standing Armed Figurines*, pl. 131.11.

4.2.7. Contextual Comparison of Fist Up and Gesture Phrases

The comments in section 4.1 regarding scholarly attempts to link gestures in art with gesture phrases in literature hold true for the Fist Up gesture. Attempts to connect this gesture with phrases used in textual passages have been few, brief, and lacking in methodology. In the case of this gesture, some scholars link the motif with textual passages describing what the gesture is thought to accomplish (such as the destruction of enemies), but they do not explore passages describing what the gesture itself is (such as raising the hand or brandishing a weapon). For example, Lohfink, in a discussion of the Song at the Sea in Exodus 15, writes the following:

Das erste Bild kennen wir aus der bildenden Kunst des alten Orients: die Gottheit, die ihre rechte Hand mit der Keule hoch erhoben hat, um den Gegner—oft das Chaosungetüm, oft menschliche Feinde—zu zerschmettern.¹⁴⁹

Lohfink is referring specifically to Exodus 15:6: “With your right hand, O Yahweh glorious in strength—with your right hand, O Yahweh, you shattered the enemy.” However, he does not discuss how this might apply to verse 12, which mentions Yahweh’s gesture of extending his right hand (*nʾṭṭʰ yʾmīʾn*).¹⁵⁰

Wyatt, in an in-depth study of what he calls the “*Chaoskampf* motif” in Northwest Semitic literature and iconography, links the smiting god motif in Ugaritic and Egyptian iconography with Exodus 17:11-12; Deuteronomy 4:34; and Exodus 14:16, 26, where the Hebrew phrases are *heriʾm yʾd bʾl* “raise the hand with I,” *nʾṭṭʰ zʾroʾ* “extend the arm,” and

¹⁴⁹ Norbert Lohfink, *Das Siegeslied am Schilfmeer* (Frankfurt am Main: Josef Knecht, 1965), 115. Cf. William H. C. Propp, *The Anchor Bible: Exodus 1-18* (New York: Doubleday, 1999), 519.

¹⁵⁰ One may think that the two verses are linked thematically, since they both mention the deeds accomplished by Yahweh’s right hand. However, Lohfink’s view on this matter is not clear. He believes that the two verses belong to different sections of the composition, the words to be sung by a *preisende Chor* (including verse 6) and those to be sung by an *erzählende Chor* (including verse 12), and his descriptions of the images evoked in the two verses do not betray any sense of their being the same. See Lohfink, *Siegeslied*, 109, 115, 117.

nwtʿ^h yʿd (bʿl) ‘*al-T* “extend the hand (with I) against T” respectively.¹⁵¹ This amounts to an unambiguous equation of the iconographic motif with the set of gesture phrases described in section 3.2.1. Yet this equation is not made on the grounds of systematic comparison. Indeed, the equation is not explicitly argued; the artistic motif and the biblical passages are mentioned in turn as evidence for a single ritual procedure (the smiting of captured enemies by the king at the temple), and the connection between the two forms of evidence is only implied.¹⁵²

In the following synthesis based on context, we seek to show that Wyatt’s implied connection between the smiting god motif and the phrases discussed in section 3.2.1 is correct. These phrases, including *nwtʿ^h yʿd (bʿl)* ‘*al-T* “extend the hand (with I) against T” and its synonyms, occur in the contextual type of destruction or exertion of supernatural power. As we seek to demonstrate below, the elements of this contextual type correspond to the iconographic elements of the smiting god motif, including the combat setting, the use or non-use of weapons, the identity of the agent as a (usually male) deity, and the specific features of the gesture as described and depicted.

4.2.7.1. Setting

Some of the examples adduced above provide clear evidence of the settings that were thought appropriate for the Fist Up gesture; these examples indicate that the typical setting for this gesture was one of large-scale violent action. In some cases, the scene is a battlefield. The composite figurine Louvre AO 22.265 shows a goddess in Fist Up mounted on a chariot. On the

¹⁵¹ Nicolas Wyatt, “Arms and the King,” in *“Und Mose schrieb dieses Lied auf”*: Studien zum Alten Testament und zum Alten Orient, *Festschrift für Oswald Loretz*, ed. Manfred Dietrich and Ingo Kottsieper (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1998), 866, 870-71.

¹⁵² Since Wyatt (*ibid.*) refers to H. P. L’Orange, *Studies on the Iconography of Cosmic Kingship in the Ancient World* (New Rochelle, New York: Caratzas Brothers, 1982), 139-70, it should be noted that L’Orange incorrectly equates the same set of biblical passages with the raising of the hand, the palm open and facing outward. This gesture is discussed below in section 4.2.2.

metal bowls BM 123053 and Delphi 4463, the gesture is performed in attacks on fortresses by a defender and an attacker respectively. The battlefield setting for the Fist Up gesture compares well with some of the descriptive settings for the gesture of destruction or exertion of supernatural power in literature. Moses' use of the gesture in Exodus 17:11-12 (described using the phrase *heriʿm yʿd*) and Joshua's use of the gesture in Joshua 8:18-19, 26 (described using the phrase *nʿtʿh yʿd*), for example, take place in battlefield settings: a battle against the Amalekites and a siege of the city of Ai.¹⁵³

In other cases, the setting appears to be of cosmic proportions. The "Baal au foudre" stela (Louvre AO 15.775) shows Baʿlu standing upon a series of lines which, as discussed in section 4.2.2, seem to represent layers of the cosmos, wielding a lightning spear that evokes his role as the storm god. The smiting god figure is also shown larger than life and standing atop mountains on several other objects, specifically the Iron Age II stela from Amrit (Louvre AO 22247), five Nimrud ivories (IM 65372, IM 65418, IM NN [3], Tokyo 9090-1, Tokyo 9090-3), five Syrian-style cylinder seals (Montreal NN, Newell 303, PBN Seyrig 108, PML NN [1], PLU [35]), and a bowl from Kourion (MMA 74.51.4554).¹⁵⁴ The large-scale, cosmic settings in these examples are similar in proportion to the biblical scenes of creation and of the primordial victory over chaos, in which Yahweh is described as using a lifted- or extended-hand gesture (Jeremiah 27:5;

¹⁵³ As these two examples from the Hebrew Bible suggest, the battle setting should not be taken to imply that the Fist Up gesture is only for simple, contact smiting. Both Moses and Joshua perform their gestures from a distance, and the gesture obviously has a supernatural character, despite the fact that physical weapons (a rod and a sickle sword) are raised. On the bowl Delphi 4463, it is interesting that the axe-wielding figure in Fist Up comes behind the archer. This could, perhaps, be interpreted as showing that the gesture was effective at a distance. The supernatural character of this scene is confirmed by the appearance of a chariot drawn by a sphinx. Nevertheless, the scene is schematic and unrealistic, which warns against pressing the details too far. Cf. Markoe, *Bowls*, 52, 67.

¹⁵⁴ Williams-Forte, "Snake and the Tree," 28, commenting on PBN Seyrig 108, states: "Thus the locale of the battle between the storm god and the serpent and the original abode of the snake appear to be integrally connected with the mountains...In the Near East, mountains are traditionally considered 'cosmic,' the bond between heaven and earth, where the divine becomes manifest." The cylinder seal from Tell el-Dabʿa discussed above, which is clearly of Northwest Semitic inspiration but which includes elements of Egyptian influence, shows a similar motif of a storm god striding on two mountains with a serpent beneath them. See Edith Porada, "The Cylinder Seal from Tell el-Dabʿa," *American Journal of Archaeology* 88 (1984): 485-88.

32:17; Psalm 89:10-14). Also, the angel in 1 Chronicles 21:16, who stretches out his hand with a sword to destroy Jerusalem, is described as standing “between the earth and the sky,” and king David sees the angel only after looking upward; the setting here is cosmic both in terms of the angel’s location and in terms of the scope of the angel’s action (the supernatural destruction of a city’s population).

Smaller-scale combat settings, though comparatively rare, are nevertheless possible, like the dispatching of the ape-like creature in the context of a stag hunt on the bowls MMA 74.51.4556 and RMVG 61565. A similar small-scale setting is implied in Ezekiel 14:9, in which Yahweh describes extending his hand to destroy a single false prophet. Exodus 24:11; Job 1:11, 12; and Job 2:5 also describe violent action involving a stretched-out hand on a small scale, but the contextual type of the gesture in these latter cases is uncertain (cf. section 2.2.27). For both the Fist Up gesture in art and the gesture of destruction or exertion of supernatural power in literature, therefore, small-scale violent settings are much rarer than large-scale settings.

4.2.7.2. Inscriptions

Evidence from inscriptions on Levantine art objects showing the Fist Up gesture is very meager. Only one of the stelae in our corpus showing this gesture (the Iron Age II stela from Amrit, Louvre AO 22247) bears an inscription, and it is hardly legible and does not provide any information about the gesture. The stamp seals are typically inscribed, but the inscriptions are short and unrelated to the gesture, consisting mainly of the names of seal owners. Only the inscription on the stone plaque from Arslan Tash (Aleppo 1329) relates in a general sense to the Fist Up gesture. The inscription is apotropaic, consisting of incantations against various

demons.¹⁵⁵ It seems likely that the gesture reinforces the apotropaic purpose of the plaque, helping to dispel the demons.

Given the paucity of evidence relating to the Fist Up gesture from inscriptions, it is appropriate to turn to inscriptions accompanying the motif in neighboring cultures. In this case, some helpful evidence comes from Egyptian sources. Egyptian depictions of the Fist Up gesture are labeled with the verb *sḫr* “smite.” An example of this is a relief from the seventh pylon at the temple of Karnak in Upper Egypt, in which king Thutmose III is shown with his right hand in the Fist Up gesture with a mace, his left hand grasping a group of Asiatic rulers by the hair, together with a rod. The inscription above the cowering captive rulers reads, *sḫr wr.w n.w rtnw ḥ3s.wt nb.t š3t t3.w nb.w fnḥw* “smiting of the rulers of Retjenu and (of) all foreign lands, the secrets of all lands, (even of) Fenkhu.”¹⁵⁶ Many similar examples could be added; indeed, the label *sḫr* has been described in modern scholarship as “the standard wording accompanying depictions of the pharaoh in this pose.”¹⁵⁷ Labels with the verb *sḫr* may be compared with conjoined result clauses following Northwest Semitic phrases of lifting or extending the hand in the context of destruction or exertion of supernatural power. Specifically, the verb *hikkō^h* “smite” is used following the phrases *heri^vm yōd* (Exodus 7:20; Numbers 20:11), *nōṭō^h yōd* (Exodus 8:13; Isaiah 5:25), *heni^vp yōd* (Isaiah 11:15), *šōlah yōd* (Exodus 3:20; 9:15), and *nōśō^v (yōd)* (Isaiah 10:24, 26). As argued in section 3.2.1.5, the “smiting” in the Northwest Semitic examples may be

¹⁵⁵ For studies of the inscription, see Frank Moore Cross and Richard J. Saley, “Phoenician Incantations on a Plaque of the Seventh Century B.C. from Arslan Tash in Upper Syria,” *BASOR* 197 (1970): 47; Dennis Pardee, “Les documents d’Arslan Tash: Authentiques ou faux?” *Syria* 75 (1998): 15-54.

¹⁵⁶ *ANEP*, no. 312; *Urk.* 4:773. Our transliteration of *rtnw* “Retjenu” reflects the spelling on the monument, which shows the sound change of *t* to *t*.

¹⁵⁷ Smith, “Near Eastern Forerunners,” 177. It is actually on this basis that Smith introduces the now-famous designation of this pose as “the Smiting God.” In general on the motif’s significance in ancient Egypt, and for more examples, see Richard H. Wilkinson, *Symbol and Magic in Egyptian Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1994), 176-79, 188-89.

effected through contact or at a distance, and the interpretation in a given instance depends on context.

In addition to these examples in which the verb *skr* is used, a stela in the Chicago Oriental Institute showing Rashap in smiting pose (OI 10569) includes an enigmatic label of the god's action, namely the circumstantial verb *k3b=f*.¹⁵⁸ The standard meanings of the Egyptian verb *k3b* are “fold over, double, multiply,” meanings which do not suit the context here very well.¹⁵⁹ Simpson translates the verb form in this instance as “he who winds about,” explaining that “the phrase...is rather curious and might refer to lightning or to the storm god quickly turning about to smite an enemy.”¹⁶⁰ This idea that the verb refers to lightning is somewhat problematic, since it presupposes that Rashap is a storm god, a notion which has been challenged in recent scholarship.¹⁶¹ Stadelmann translates the verb as “welcher (die Opfer) verdoppelt,”¹⁶² and Cornelius translates it as “when he multiplies.”¹⁶³ These interpretations, while possible, seem somewhat unlikely as descriptions of a smiting god. Another interpretation, reported by William J. Fulco and attributed to William Hallo, is “who draws near (for battle)”;¹⁶⁴ the verb in this instance is understood as a Northwest Semitic loanword from the root *qrb* “come near, approach,” which occurs in the Hebrew Bible in the sense of drawing near for battle.¹⁶⁵ In our opinion, this latter interpretation is to be preferred, since it fits best in this context and since it

¹⁵⁸ William Kelly Simpson, “An Egyptian Statuette of a Phoenician God,” *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* n.s. 10 (1952): 185-86; *ANEP*, no. 476; Seeden, pl. 137.1; Keel, *Symbolism of the Biblical World*, 219-21, fig. 302; Cornelius, *ICGRB*, 32-33, pl. 5 (no. RR7); Emily Teeter, *Ancient Egypt: Treasures from the Collection of the Oriental Institute, University of Chicago* (Chicago: Oriental Institute, 2003), 60 (no. 28).

¹⁵⁹ *WÄS*, 5:8-9; Faulkner, 275.

¹⁶⁰ Simpson, “Egyptian Statuette,” 186.

¹⁶¹ William J. Fulco, *The Canaanite God Rešep* (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1976), 14, 56-62; Cornelius, *ICGRB*, 258.

¹⁶² Rainer Stadelmann, *Syrisch-palästinensische Gottheiten in Ägypten* (Leiden: Brill, 1967), 70.

¹⁶³ Cornelius, *ICGRB*, 33, 258.

¹⁶⁴ Fulco, *Canaanite God Rešep*, 14-15. This suggestion is also adopted by Emily Teeter, *Ancient Egypt*, 60.

¹⁶⁵ BDB, 897, definition 1.a under the Qal stem. The verb is also found in Ugaritic, though not specifically in the bellicose sense; see *DULAT*, 2:708-9.

accords with the many indicators of Northwest Semitic influence on this stela.¹⁶⁶ If this interpretation is correct, it would reinforce the connection with the Northwest Semitic phrases mentioned above in a general way, since it would point yet again to the militant nature of the gesture.

Another source of inscribed examples of the smiting god motif is North Syrian stelae and orthostats bearing hieroglyphic Luwian inscriptions. In some cases, the usefulness of these inscriptions is not in describing the Fist Up gesture or its function but in confirming the identity of the agent; for instance, three inscribed orthostats from Arslantepe specifically identify the smiting figure depicted on them as the storm god.¹⁶⁷ However, there are at least two examples that shed a great deal of light on the function of the Fist Up gesture. Both of these are stelae from Til Barsib. The first (Aleppo 2) shows a male figure striding on a bull, facing right, his right hand in Fist Up with an axe, his left hand forward with a lightning trident, and a winged sun disk above his head. The accompanying inscription in hieroglyphic Luwian is somewhat broken, but it mentions a king raising his hands to the celestial Tarhunzas to deliver him from a rival, Tarhunzas hearing him, giving the enemy into the dedicant king's hands, and the dedicant king destroying his enemy.¹⁶⁸ The second (Louvre AO 11505) shows exactly the same scene, except that the figure's feet and perhaps an animal below them are missing. Hawkins translates the accompanying hieroglyphic Luwian inscription as follows:

I am Hamiyatas, Masuwarean [king, son of ...] king, Tarhunza's servant...I seated, and with (him) I set also the Sun God of the Radiance(?), and among the gods...I placed...But (he) who shall erase my name, or shall desire evil against my person, or my son, ...or shall regard my wife (as) his concubine(?), or [...] brother or the

¹⁶⁶ Cf. Teeter, *Ancient Egypt*, 60; also see the discussion in section 4.2.1.2 above.

¹⁶⁷ The museum numbers are Ankara 55, Ankara 12251, and Ankara 12252. See Hawkins, *CHLI I*, 1:309-12, pls. 149-50.

¹⁶⁸ *ANEP*, no. 531; Hawkins, *CHLI I*, 1:239-43, pls. 99-100; Bunnens, *A New Luwian Stele and the Cult of the Storm-God at Til Barsib-Masuware* (Louvain: Peeters, 2006), 111, 156, fig. 56 (no. 1).

brother's son, from the sky may Tarhunzas curse (them)!...they shall come. For this celestial Tarhunzas [... let him] destroy the lord of the house(?), his head, wife, child (and) place!¹⁶⁹

The inscriptions on both Aleppo 2 and Louvre AO 11505 clearly associate the Fist Up gesture of the storm god with destructive power wielded against the enemies of the dedicant, either delivering up the enemies to be destroyed by the dedicant (in Aleppo 2) or directly cursing the enemies with destruction (in Louvre AO 11505). This compares well with biblical passages that describe Yahweh extending his hand against people and nations; many of these passages specifically use verbs for “destroy” in result clauses following the gesture phrases (see section 3.2.1).

4.2.7.3. Connections to Mythological Events from Textual Sources

There have been several attempts to connect examples of the smiting god motif with mythological events narrated, mentioned, or alluded to in literature. Although attempts to link individual art pieces with specific textual passages have not been fully convincing, these studies do demonstrate a general connection between the smiting god motif in art and the mythical motif, expressed in literature, of a deity fighting the forces of chaos. The “Baal au foudre” stela, because of its well-executed yet mysterious details and because of its collocation with the Ugaritic mythological texts, has been a major focus in these studies. There are two textual scenes in particular with which the stela has been connected, both from the Ba‘lu epic. The first scene describes Kotharu fashioning two maces and Ba‘lu using them to defeat the god Yammu.

¹⁶⁹ Hawkins, *CHLI* I, 1:227-30, pls. 91-92; this stela is also found in *ANEP*, no. 532; Bunnens, *New Luwian Stele*, 111, 157, fig. 58 (no. 3).

(11) kṭr ṣmdm . ynḥt . w ypʿr . ṣmthm . ṣmk ʿat (12) ygrš . ygrš . grš ym grš ym . l ksʿih (13) nhr . l khṭ . drkth . trtqš . bd bʿl . km nš- (14) r . b ʿuṣbʿth . hlm . ktp . zbl . ym . bn ydm (15) [tp]ṭ . nhr . yrtqš . ṣmd . bd bʿl . km . nšr (16) [b ʿu]ṣbʿth . ylm . ktp . zbl ym . bn . ydm . ṭpt (17) [nh]r . ʿz . ym . l ymk . l tngšn [.] pnth . l ydlp (18) tmnh . kṭr . ṣmdm . ynḥt . w ypʿr . ṣmthm . (19) ṣmk . ʿat . ʿaymr . ʿaymr . mr . ym . mr . ym (20) l ksʿih . nhr l khṭ . drkth . trtqš (21) bd bʿl . km . nšr b ʿuṣbʿth . hlm . qdq- (22) d . zbl ym . bn . ʿnm . ṭpt . nhr . ypršh ym (23) w yql . l ʿarš . w yrtqš . ṣmd . bd bʿl (24) km [.] nšr . b ʿuṣbʿth . ylm . qdqd . zbl (25) ym [.] bn . ʿnm . ṭpt . nhr . ypršh . ym . yql (26) l ʿarš . tngšn . pnth . w ydlp . tmnh (27) yqt bʿl . w yšt . ym . ykly . ṭpt . nhr

(11) Kotharu prepared two maces; he pronounced their names: “You, your name (12) is Yagrushu. Yagrushu, drive out Yammu. Drive Yammu from his throne, (13) (drive) Naharu from the seat of his dominion. You shall swoop in Baʿlu’s hand, (you shall swoop) like a rap- (14) tor in his fingers. Smite the shoulder of Prince Yammu, (smite) between the arms (15) of [Jud]ge Naharu.” The mace swooped in the hand of Baʿlu, (it swooped) like a raptor (16) [in] his [fi]ngers. It smote the shoulder of Prince Yammu, (it smote) between the arms of Judge (17) [Naha]ru. Yammu was strong, he did not collapse. His joints did not buckle, his frame (18) did not totter. Kotharu prepared two maces; he pronounced their names: (19) “You, your name is ʿAyyamru. ʿAyyamru, expel Yammu. Expel Yammu (20) from his throne, (expel) Naharu from the seat of his dominion. You shall swoop (21) in Baʿlu’s hand, (you shall swoop) like a raptor in his fingers. Smite the head (22) d of Prince Yammu, (smite) between the eyes of Judge Naharu. Yammu will be toppled, (23) he will fall to the earth.” The mace swooped in the hand of Baʿlu, (24) (it swooped) like a raptor in his fingers. It smote the head of Prince (25) Yammu, (it smote) between the eyes of Judge Naharu. Yammu was toppled, he fell (26) to the earth. His joints buckled, his frame tottered. (27) Baʿlu yanked (him) up, he shattered Yammu,¹⁷⁰ he finished off Judge Naharu.

¹⁷⁰ The verbs *yqt* and *yšt* have been rendered in various ways. Julian Obermann, “How Baal Destroyed a Rival: A Mythological Incantation Scene,” *JAOS* 67 (1947): 205, links *yqt* to Arabic *qatta* “pull out, eradicate, extirpate” and *yšt* to Arabic *šatta* “become broken up, deranged, disorganized” and *šattata* “dissolve, break up, derange.” Edward Greenstein, “The Snaring of Sea in the Baal Epic,” *Maarav* 3 (1982): 195-216, links *yqt* to Hebrew *yqš* “to ensnare” and *yšt* to Hebrew *šyt* “put, place,” translating *wyšt ym* as “and places Yammu (in the snare).” As pointed out by later interpreters (see immediately below), Greenstein’s etymology of *yqt* is problematic because Hebrew *yqš* is usually taken to be cognate with Ugaritic *yqš* “fowler.” M. Dietrich and O. Loretz, “Baal vernichtet Yammu (KTU 1.2 IV 23-30),” *UF* 17 (1986): 117-21, take *yqt* from *qt* but translate as “ziehen, wegziehen,” and they take *yšt* from the hollow root but translate as “hinlegen.” Mark S. Smith, *The Ugaritic Baal Cycle, Volume I: Introduction with Text, Translation and Commentary of KTU 1.1-1.2* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 323, translates the passage in question as “Baal drags and dismembers (?) Yamm.” He includes an extensive review of the previous proposals on pp. 351-54. He also suggests the possibility of deriving *yqt* from *nqt* “strike” (cf. BDB, 669); however, as he points out, the previous striking would render this one superfluous; moreover, he fails to mention that the Syriac cognate is *nqaš* “knock, strike” (BDB, 669; *CSD*, 352-53), not *nqat* as would be expected if the final radical were *ṭ. Dennis Pardee in *COS*, 1:249 (1997); and Pierre Bordreuil and Dennis Pardee, *A Manual of Ugaritic* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 160, translate the passage as “Baʿlu grabs Yammu and sets about dismembering (him).” They further explain

Pierre Bordreuil has discussed in detail how the scene of Ba‘lu raising a mace in the “Baal au foudre” stela seems to relate to what is described in *KTU* 1.2 iv 11-27.¹⁷¹ Most notably, the protagonist in both cases is Ba‘lu, and the weapon by which the blows are executed in the epic is the same as the weapon in the upraised hand on the stela, namely a mace. On the stela, there is no explicit target for the Fist Up gesture; Bordreuil suggests that among the lines beneath Ba‘lu’s feet are the waves of the Mediterranean sea, these being employed as a representation of Yammu (“sea”), but the superiority of Ba‘lu over Yammu is expressed in this case through high vs. low position, not by depicting Yammu as a target of the gesture. Nevertheless, we have shown above that there are other examples of the smiting god motif in which the smiting figure raises a mace with one hand and grasps a cowering captive by the hair with the other, and the last line of the passage just quoted, “Ba‘lu yanked (him) up, he shattered Yammu, he finished off Judge Naharu,” invokes a similar image.

The second relevant passage from the Ba‘lu epic describes Ba‘lu fighting with a cedar or weapon made of cedar.

their analysis of these verbs as being from *qtt* “drag (to/for oneself)” and *štt* (etymologically **štt*) “scatter, dismember” (Bordreuil and Pardee, *Manual*, 327, 347). Their analysis thus agrees with that of Obermann in its basic outlines, although the understanding of the semantics of *qtt* is more in line with that of Dietrich and Loretz. Nicolas Wyatt, *Religious Texts from Ugarit* (London: Sheffield, 2002), 67-68, translates the passage as “Baal gathered up / and drank <Prince> Yam to the dregs; / he exterminated Ruler Nahar.” Wyatt compares *yqt* with Biblical Hebrew *qšš* (cf. BDB, 905), extrapolating the general sense of “collecting” from the notion of collecting chaff that is present in the Hebrew verb; and he derives *yšt* from *šty* “drink.” *DULAT*, 2:721, 848-51, basically agrees with Dietrich and Loretz (*yqt* < *qtt* “drag,” *yšt* < *šty* with special meaning “fix” or “bring down”). We derive both of the verbs in question from geminate roots, as do the majority of interpreters (Obermann, Smith, Bordreuil, and Pardee). However, a translation of *qtt* as “yank up,” following the sense of the Arabic cognate *qtt* “uproot, eradicate” (Lane, 7:2487; cf. Obermann, “How Baal Destroyed,” 205), seems to us to provide the best sense. Further, a translation of *štt* as “shatter” seems to suit the action of a mace better than “scatter, dismember.” The present writer has in mind the motif, found in Egyptian and Phoenician iconography, of a crowned figure with upraised mace, poised to smite a cowering captive (or a group of captives) whom he holds up by the hair.

¹⁷¹ Pierre Bordreuil, “Recherches ougaritiques. I. Où Baal a-t-il remporté la victoire contre Yam?” *Semitica* 40 (1991): 17-27. See also Terry Fenton, “Baal au foudre: Of Snakes and Mountains, Myth and Message,” in *Ugarit, Religion and Culture*, ed. Nicolas Wyatt, W. G. E. Watson, and J. B. Lloyd (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1996), 58.

KTU 1.4 vii 25-41

(25) ...ypth . ḥ- (26) ln . bbhtm . 'urbt (27) bqr̄b . hk[lm . yp]th̄ (28) b'1 . bdqt
[. 'rp]t (29) qlh . qdš [.] b['1 . y]tn (30) ytny . b'1 . š['at . š]p̄th (31) qlh . q[dš .
t]r . 'arš (32) [...] ḡrm [.] thš̄n (33) r̄h̄q[...] (34) qdmym bmt . 'a[rš] (35) tt̄tn .
'ib . b'1 . t'ih̄d (36) y'rm . šn'u . hd . gpt (37) ḡr . w y'n . 'al'iyn (38) b'1 .
'ib . hdt . lm . thš̄ (39) lm . thš̄ . ntq . dmr̄n (40) 'n . b'1 . qdm . ydh (41) k
tḡd . 'arz . b ymnh

(25) He opened a win- (26) dow in the house, a latticed window (27) in the midst of the palace. Ba'lu opened (28) a rift in the cloud. (29) Ba'lu projected his holy voice, (30) Ba'lu repeated the is[sue of his li]ps. (31) His ho[ly voice caused] the earth [to sha]ke, (32) [at the issue of his lips] the mountains trembled. (33) [...] removed [...] (34) [...] the high places of the earth (35) quivered. The enemies of Ba'lu took hold of (36) (the trees of) the forest, the haters of Haddu (took hold of) the mountainside. (37) Almighty Ba'lu said: (38) Enemies of Haddu, why do you tremble? (39) Why do you tremble at the weapons of Dimaranu? (40) Ba'lu looked ahead of his hand, (41) as the cedar shot from his right hand.

Nicolas Wyatt argues for a correspondence between this textual passage and the “Baal au foudre” stela.¹⁷² There are general points of agreement between the two, most notably the cosmic setting and the “hybrid” nature of the projectile weapon (a tree-like weapon that is hurled as lightning).¹⁷³ However, there are problems with the details in this proposed correspondence. The text describes the deity holding a “cedar” in his right hand, while the stela shows a mace in the right hand and a plant-like spear in the left.¹⁷⁴ Further, the plant-like elements of the spear on the stela do not resemble the pinnate leaves of a cedar tree. Wyatt is surely on steadier ground when, in his initial article, he opens the comparison to other examples of the smiting god motif, which

¹⁷² Nicolas Wyatt, “A Further Weapon for Baal?” *UF* 22 (1990): 464-65; Nicolas Wyatt, *Religious Texts from Ugarit* (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 110-11.

¹⁷³ The term “hybrid” is from Wyatt, “Further Weapon,” 465. Another term that could describe this phenomenon is “consubstantiality,” used by Fenton with reference to Ba'lu's multiple but apparently homologized enemies (watery mass, serpent, and anthropomorphic figure). See Fenton, “Baal au foudre,” 58. While the two terms are perhaps equally valid, they carry quite different theological connotations.

¹⁷⁴ Wyatt divides the cola differently from our reading (which follows the majority of interpreters) and understands the word *qdm* to mean “axe” (possibly as an error for *qrdm*): Wyatt, “Further Weapon,” 464-65; Wyatt, *Religious Texts*, 110-11. Thus, in his reading, Ba'lu has two weapons: a “cedar” in his right hand and an axe in his left. This still fails to match the scene on the stela, in which the plant-like weapon is in the left hand and a mace (not an axe) is in the upraised right.

show more variation in the weapons held in the storm god's two hands.¹⁷⁵ Rather than a specific correspondence between *KTU* 1.4 vii 25-41 and the "Baal au foudre" stela, what we have here could be more accurately described as a general commonality of concepts concerning Ba'lu that are expressed in many examples of both literature and art with relatively limited variation.

Elizabeth Williams-Forte outlines a four-stage mythic cycle that she believes is portrayed on Middle Bronze Age cylinder seals from Syria and Anatolia. The four stages are: (1) "the god impaling, with the tree-weapon/lightning, the serpent which rises against him from beneath the mountains"; (2) "the victorious storm god displaying the conquered serpent to a goddess"; (3) "the victorious god displaying to human or divine worshippers the weapon with which he slew the serpent"; and (4) "the worship of the emblem of the god's victory, i.e. the tree-weapon/lightning, by divine, human, and composite figures."¹⁷⁶ The smiting god pose is a characteristic of the god in each of the stages, rather than being a marked aspect of any one stage. Williams-Forte connects this narrative cycle with Ugaritic and biblical texts mentioning or alluding to a primordial combat between the storm god and a serpent-like creature (which she identifies with the god Motu); she draws a sharp distinction between this combat and others in which the foe is associated with the sea.¹⁷⁷ Terry Fenton similarly connects the smiting god motif with assorted texts mentioning or alluding to a primordial combat; however, he focuses not on cylinder seals but on the "Baal au foudre" stela, on whose base he sees a serpent, and he considers the foe in all of these texts—whether serpent, dragon, or "sea"—to be "consubstantial"

¹⁷⁵ Wyatt, "Further Weapon," 465; cf. Elizabeth Williams-Forte, "The Snake and the Tree in the Iconography and Texts of Syria during the Bronze Age," in *Ancient Seals and the Bible*, ed. Leonard Gorelick and Elizabeth Williams-Forte (Malibu, California: Undena, 1983), 36, 39, figs. 8-9. Lambert, "Trees, Snakes and Gods," 441-42, suggests that the cedar-like element is separate from the weapon with which the snake is impaled in these scenes (see below); however, this runs into conflict with the "Baal au foudre" stela, in which the foliated top is not a separate element but clearly belongs to the spear.

¹⁷⁶ Williams-Forte, "Snake and the Tree," 25-26.

¹⁷⁷ Williams-Forte, "Snake and the Tree," 18, 32-38.

variants of the same entity.¹⁷⁸ The textual passages adduced by Williams-Forte and Fenton are summarized in the following table:

Table 17. Textual Sources for Primordial Combat in Connection with the Smiting God Motif

Textual passage	Summary	References
<i>KTU</i> 1.2 iv 11-27	account of Ba'lu smiting and slaying Yammu ("sea"), also called Naharu ("river")	Fenton, "Baal au foudre," 58.
<i>KTU</i> 1.3 iii 38-42	goddess 'Anatu recounts having defeated enemies of Ba'lu described by various terms: Yammu ("sea"), Naharu ("river"), Tunnanu (name of serpent-like creature), <i>baṭnu 'aqallatānu</i> "twisting serpent," and <i>šalyaṭu dū šab 'ati ra 'ašīma</i> "coiling one with seven heads"	Williams-Forte, "Snake and the Tree," 32-33; Fenton, "Baal au foudre," 58
<i>KTU</i> 1.4 vii 25-41	Ba'lu fights against unnamed "enemies" (Williams-Forte assumes identification with Motu ["death"])	*Williams-Forte, "Snake and the Tree," 34-36
<i>KTU</i> 1.5 i 1-3, 27-30	mention of Ba'lu having smitten enemy/enemies referred to by various terms: Litanu (name of serpent-like creature), <i>baṭnu barīḫu</i> "fleeing serpent," <i>baṭnu 'aqallatānu</i> "twisting serpent," and <i>šalyaṭu dū šab 'ati ra 'ašīma</i> "coiling one with seven heads"	Williams-Forte, "Snake and the Tree," 33; Fenton, "Baal au foudre," 58
<i>KTU</i> 1.82 1	broken reference to Ba'lu smiting Tunnanu	Fenton, "Baal au foudre," 58
<i>KTU</i> 1.83 8-9	broken reference to a defeat of Tunnanu	Fenton, "Baal au foudre," 58
Genesis 3:1-24	possible allusions to myth involving serpent and tree-weapon	*Williams-Forte, "Snake and the Tree," 18, 38-39
Isaiah 27:1	mention of Yahweh having defeated Liwyatan (name of serpent-like creature), called <i>nḫš brḫ</i> "fleeing serpent," and having slain Tanninim (name of serpent-like creature), described as <i>bym</i> "in the sea"	Fenton, "Baal au foudre," 58

¹⁷⁸ Terry Fenton, "Baal au foudre: Of Snakes and Mountains, Myth and Message," in *Ugarit, Religion and Culture*, ed. Nicolas Wyatt, W. G. E. Watson, and J. B. Lloyd (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1996), 58-60.

Table 17, continued

Textual passage	Summary	References
Isaiah 51:9-10	mention of Yahweh having defeated various foes: Rahab, Tannin, the sea/Yam, the deep/Tehom	Fenton, "Baal au foudre," 58
Psalms 74:13-14	mention of Yahweh having divided the sea/Yam, shattered the heads of Tanninim, crushed to pieces the heads of Liwyatan	Fenton, "Baal au foudre," 58
Job 7:12	allusion to Yahweh having set guard over the sea/Yam and/or Tannin	Fenton, "Baal au foudre," 58
Job 9:8	mention of Yahweh having trodden on the back of the sea/Yam	Fenton, "Baal au foudre," 60
Job 26:12-13	mention of Yahweh having disturbed the sea/Yam, smitten Rahab, and his hand having pierced <i>nhš bryh</i> "fleeing serpent"	Fenton, "Baal au foudre," 58

Note: An asterisk (*) indicates a reference in Williams-Forte's article in which she sees a connection between the cited textual passage and Middle Bronze Age cylinder seals.

There is variation in these textual sources in the protagonist (god or goddess), the enemy being defeated (watery or reptilian), and the weapons and methods used to defeat the enemy. Iconographic sources showing the smiting god motif show similar variation in their elements: the smiting figure is occasionally female, a variety of targets is represented, and various weapons are used. This variety poses a problem for Williams-Forte's analysis. Although she is selective in her comparisons with the textual sources, the variation in the seals themselves, even within her own corpus, calls into question the coherence of her reconstructed mythic cycle.¹⁷⁹ Further, Williams-Forte focuses on the action of the lowered hand in the motif, which is uniformly the hand that wields the foliated spear against the serpent (in those examples in which these elements are shown), so her study does not relate directly to the nature of the Fist Up gesture. Fenton's

¹⁷⁹ Cf. Lambert, "Trees, Snakes and Gods," who objects to some of Williams-Forte's conclusions on similar grounds.

approach allows for variation in the texts and iconography, but his identification of the lines under Ba‘lu’s feet as a serpent is open to dispute, since the lines on the stela may be interpreted in many ways. Therefore, it is not in the particular connections drawn by Williams-Forte and Fenton that we find support for the identification of the Fist Up gesture with phrases used in literature. Rather, we find support in the more firmly established fact to which all of these studies point, namely that the smiting god motif is broadly linked with the literary topos of divine combat against the forces of chaos—the iconographic and textual sources show the same range of elements.

This literary topos, then, may be seen as another contextual element that connects the smiting god motif to *nṣṭḥ yṣd (bəl) ‘al-T* “extend the hand (with I) against T” and its synonyms, these being the phrases used in texts to describe the gesture with which God smites the forces of chaos. The gesture is performed with the sea (*yṣm*) as Target and with the result of dividing or drying up the sea (cf. the combat against Yammu in the Ugaritic texts and in Isaiah 51:9-10 and Psalm 74:13-14 in table 17 above) in Exodus 14:16, 21, 26-27; 15:12; Isaiah 10:26; 23:11.¹⁸⁰ The gesture phrases used in these instances are *nṣṭḥ yṣd (bəl) ‘al-T* “extend the hand (with I) against T,” *nṣṭḥ yṣmiṣn* “extend the right hand,” and *nṣṣ’ yṣd/I ‘al-T_{add}* “lift up the hand/I against T_{add}.” Also, in Isaiah 11:15, the Target of the gesture phrase *heniṣp yṣd ‘al-T_{add}* “elevate the hand against T_{add}” is the river (*nḥḥr*), which recalls the term Naharu used for Ba‘lu’s enemy in Ugaritic texts (cf. *KTU* 1.2 iv 11-27; 1.3 iii 38-42 in table 17). In Psalm 89:10-14, a reference to Yahweh’s subduing of the sea and breaking of Rahab (cf. Isaiah 51:9-10 in table 17) is

¹⁸⁰ For full citations of these passages and analysis, see chapter 2. In the first three of these instances, the immediate Agent of the gesture is Moses; however, the gesture is subsequently attributed to Yahweh (see, for instance, Exodus 14:31 and the other passages cited here from Exodus and Isaiah). For the idea that the gesture at the sea in Exodus purposely echoes the mythical combat of Yahweh against chaos, see Propp, *Exodus 1-18*, 554-61; Wyatt, “Arms and the King,” 871. For the same idea in Isaiah 23:11, see Otto Kaiser, *Isaiah 13-39: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1974), 167.

collocated with a reference to Yahweh’s hand being high; the phrase used is *רַמֵּהּ יְמִינֶהָ* “of the right hand, be high.”

4.2.7.4. Target

Many examples of the smiting god motif in Northwest Semitic art, particularly the carved ivories, cylinder seals, and metal bowls, explicitly show a target for the Fist Up gesture. The variety of targets is summarized in the following list. Examples in which the entity’s role as target is considered probable but not certain are included in the list and marked with an asterisk (*), but examples in which the target role is simply uncertain are excluded.

griffin	<u>ivories</u> : Birmingham 451’65e, BM 2011.6001.364, Cleveland 68.45, IM 60532, IM 62661, IM 65318, IM 65336, IM 65360, IM 65372, IM 65418, IM 65471, IM 65509, IM NN (2), IM NN (3), MFA 66.917, MMA 61.197.11, Tokyo 9090-1, Tokyo 9090-3, UPenn 61.3.1; <u>cylinder seals</u> : *Damascus 2617, *PLU (32); <u>stamp seals</u> : IAA J. 894; <u>metal bowls</u> : Athens NM 7941, Louvre AO 20134, Louvre AO 20135, MMA 74.51.4554. Total: 26
human captive(s)	<u>ivories</u> : IM 79516, Samaria ivory; <u>cylinder seals</u> : Aleppo M 6339, Brussels NN, Damascus 2679, De Clercq 395, Marcopoli 442, Marcopoli 455, Moore 160, PLU (46); <u>stamp seals</u> : Haifa REH-041, IAA 69-5739, PLU (52), PLU (53), BM WAA 102736; <u>metal bowls</u> : BM Cat. of Bronzes 186, Louvre AO 20134, MMA 74.51.4554, MMA 74.51.4556, PMPP Dutuit 170, RMVG 61565, RMVG 61574, Vatican 20367. Total: 23
lion(s)	<u>stelae</u> : Louvre AO 22247; <u>ivories</u> : IM 65221, IM 65366, IM NN (1); <u>stamp seals</u> : Rockefeller 32.687, Rockefeller 32.705, PLU (55); <u>metal bowls</u> : MFA 27.170, Louvre AO 20134, Louvre AO 20135, MMA 74.51.4554, MMA 74.51.4559, Vatican 20368, PLU (58). Total: 14
scorpion	<u>cylinder seals</u> : *BM 129580, *Damascus 2617, *Damascus 2633, *Damascus 2744, *YBC 12798. Total: 5
caprid(s)	<u>cylinder seals</u> : Antakya 8840, *Damascus 2617, *Damascus 2894, *Louvre AO 17252, *PLU (45). Total: 5
bird(s)	<u>cylinder seals</u> : *Damascus 2617, *PLU (32), *PLU (45). Total: 3
large-scale entity (city or army)	<u>metal bowls</u> : BM 123053, Delphi 4463. Total: 2

ape-like creature	<u>metal bowls</u> : MMA 74.51.4556, RMVG 61565. Total: 2
bovine	<u>cylinder seals</u> : *Aleppo M 6338. Total: 1
she-wolf	<u>stamp seals</u> : PBN de Clercq 2506. Total: 1
unidentified quadruped	<u>cylinder seals</u> : Damascus NN. Total: 1

In other cases, no explicit target of the Fist Up gesture is shown, yet a target may be implied. This target could, in some instances, have been located in the real-life context in which the art object was used. For example, smiting god figurines may occasionally have been carried into battle for the purpose of magically “smiting” supernatural and/or human foes. One hundred of the one hundred and seventy-seven metal figurines showing this motif (about 56%) are furnished with tangs,¹⁸¹ which suggests that they were meant to be mounted on another object, possibly a battle standard.¹⁸² To be sure, other ideas concerning the use of these figurines have also been put forward, including that they were carried in religious processions and that they were installed in naoi in temple courtyards to serve as focal points for prayer.¹⁸³ However, these various proposals are not mutually exclusive; the figurines may have been used in a variety of settings, including both combat and other ritual contexts. The range of contexts in which they were used could be analogous to the biblical ark of the covenant, which is described as having

¹⁸¹ Only twelve of the figurines (about 7%) are well preserved but lack tangs. The remaining 37% of the figurines are uncertain with respect to the tangs due to poor preservation or insufficient documentation.

¹⁸² Cf. Claude F.-A. Schaeffer, “Nouveaux témoignages du culte de El et de Baal a Ras Shamra-Ugarit et ailleurs en Syrie-Palestine,” *Syria* 43 (1966): 9-18; a similar suggestion is made by Collon, “Smiting God,” 113, 129, who, however, believes that the standards were carried not in battle but in religious processions (see immediately below).

¹⁸³ Collon, “Smiting God,” 113, 129; Seeden, *Standing Armed Figurines*, 95-96, 131-32, 153; pls. 117, 133. Textual and archaeological support for both of these suggestions can be found. An Ugaritic ritual text *KTU* 1.43 describes an “entry” ritual in which deities, including Rashap, are carried in procession (whether these deities were figurines mounted on standards, however, is a matter of speculation); see Dennis Pardee, *Ritual and Cult at Ugarit* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002), 69-72. Syrian-Egyptian stelae and Syrian-style cylinder seals often show deities in smiting pose but facing a human worshiper, perhaps reflecting real-life ritual contexts in which smiting god figurines served as objects of worship; see *ANEP*, no. 473; Seeden, pl. 137.3; Yon, *SP*, 332, fig. 12b; and cylinder seals listed above. For more views on the use of these and other figurines, see Karel van der Toorn, “Israelite Figurines: A View from the Texts,” in *Sacred Time, Sacred Place: Archaeology and the Religion of Israel*, ed. Barry M. Gittlen (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2002), 45-62; Jack M. Sasson, “On the Use of Images in Israel and the Ancient Near East: A Response to Karel van der Toorn,” in *ibid.*, 63-70.

been carried in religious processions and into battle in addition to being housed in the cella of the temple.¹⁸⁴

Two more examples of implied targets in the real-life setting of objects bearing the smiting god motif may be cited. First, as the plaque from Arslan Tash (Aleppo 1329) served an apotropaic purpose, one can imagine that the smiting god figure's Fist Up gesture was performed against demons in a magical way. Second, the engraved bronze axe head in the Beirut National Museum (see section 4.2.6) shows a goddess in smiting pose, so that a blow with the axe would entail destruction "at the hand" of the smiting goddess and vice versa.

Another possibility that could apply to examples of the smiting god motif with no explicit target is that the target could have been assumed between the artist and the audience based on common knowledge of the mythology. In this case, the assumed target would be an embodiment of chaos, such as the sea (Yammu), death (Motu), or a primordial serpent.¹⁸⁵ This would accord with examples in which the target is explicit, since the target in most of these examples could be considered an embodiment of chaos (in the form of a savage beast or of a prisoner from a hostile foreign nation).¹⁸⁶ This possibility is not out of harmony with the idea of an implied target in the object's real-life context (as discussed above); indeed, the smiting deity could be imagined as defeating present foes with the very same gesture that he used primordially to combat the forces of chaos.

¹⁸⁴ See Judges 20:27-28 (people go to Bethel to inquire of Yahweh because the ark is there); 1 Samuel 4:3-5 (people take the ark out of the temple and march out to battle with it, expecting that it will give them victory); 2 Samuel 6 (the ark is carried in a procession into the city of David); 1 Kings 6:19; 8:1-9 (the ark is placed in the holy of holies in the temple of Solomon).

¹⁸⁵ Williams-Forte, "Snake and the Tree"; Fenton, "Baal au foudre." Cf. the discussion about mythological connections above.

¹⁸⁶ Cf. Keel, *Symbolism of the Biblical World*, 108: "The powers of Chaos and of death can manifest themselves in many varied forms: in darkness, in the watery deep, in the dust of the grave, in the fever of demonic possession, in wild animals, and in invasions by hostile peoples. They find their strongest expression in the realm of the dead and in the waters of Chaos, which assume concrete form in the sinister dragon." On the representation of prisoners from foreign nations as symbols of chaos in smiting scenes, see also *ibid.*, 295-96.

Although there is not a dearth of information on targets for the Fist Up gesture in Levantine art, a comparison with examples of the Egyptian smiting Pharaoh motif is helpful in at least one respect: the human captives that typically serve as targets of the gesture in Egyptian art are usually labeled with a hieroglyphic inscription, while this is never the case in Levantine art. These hieroglyphic inscriptions reveal that the captives in Egyptian art represent the chiefs of foreign lands. Typically, the hair of a large number of cowering prisoners, partially superimposed over each other, is gathered in one fistful of the smiting Pharaoh. Phoenician metal bowls also show two or more cowering prisoners partially superimposed over each other (BM Cat. of Bronzes 186, Louvre AO 20134, MMA 74.51.4554, MMA 74.51.4556, PMPP Dutuit 170, RMVG 61574). This suggests that the cowering prisoners in Levantine art stand metonymically for hostile foreigners or “enemies of the nation.”¹⁸⁷ In both Egyptian and Levantine art, these enemies are also identified with the general forces of chaos.¹⁸⁸

Targets of the gesture of destruction or exertion of supernatural power in literature are comparable to the targets that are shown or implied in art, although the comparison requires accounting for differences in symbolic representation. The only textual source that furnishes examples of Targets for this gesture in literature is the Hebrew Bible. The following list summarizes the data from the Hebrew Bible, including examples in which the Target is part of the gesture phrase as well as examples in which the Target is named in a result clause or elsewhere in the immediate context. In cases in which the Target in a gesture phrase is a symbol or metonymic substitute for something else that is explicitly named in the larger context of the gesture phrase, the example is classified according to the signifier—that is, according to the word used in the gesture phrase itself—and the signified entity named in the larger context is noted in

¹⁸⁷ Keel, *Symbolism of the Biblical World*, 100-109.

¹⁸⁸ Keel, *Symbolism of the Biblical World*, 100-101, 107-9; Richard H. Wilkinson, *Symbol and Magic in Egyptian Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1994), 176-77.

parentheses. Where multiple references within a pericope describe a single gesture event, these are counted as one.

large-scale entity (nation or city): 25 examples

Judah and/or Jerusalem (8)

Egypt (6)

Assyria and/or Nineveh (2)

unnamed “adversaries” or “enemy nations” (2)

house of Israel (1)

Ai (1)

all nations (1)

undefined “sinful land” (1)

Ammon (1)

Edom (1)

Philistines (1)

cosmic feature: 13 examples¹⁸⁹

sea (4)

waters of Egypt (2)

sky (2)

dust of the earth (1)

river (1)

rock (1)

mountain (symbolic of Babylon) (1)

mount Seir (metonymy for Edom) (1)

individual human: 2 examples

false prophet (1)

unfaithful bride (personification of Jerusalem) (1)

On the surface, the targets of the Fist Up gesture in art and those of the gesture of destruction or exertion of supernatural power in literature appear quite different. Although both include easily recognizable “enemies of the nation” (an enemy army, city, land, or their metonymic substitute in the form of human captives), the majority of examples in art show an animal as the target, and elements of nature are never explicitly represented as a target of the

¹⁸⁹ We use the term “cosmic feature” to designate both small- and large-scale elements of nature, including rocks, the sky, and named features of physical geography. Combining these under one rubric seems justified in light of the Exodus narrative, in which all of these serve the same literary function as Targets of Moses’ gestures that bring about the plagues.

gesture, while the Targets in literature include cosmic features but not animals. However, these differences can be reconciled if we consider that animals and cosmic features can both stand symbolically for national or ethnic bodies in addition to being associated with the forces of chaos.

The symbolic association of animals with political and ethnic groups is common cross-culturally and cross-historically. As just one example, one could cite the representation, in modern political cartoons, of the United States as an eagle and of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics as a bear. The use of animals as symbols of foreign and hostile entities is not, to our knowledge, rendered explicit in ancient Levantine art. However, clear examples can be found in the art of neighboring cultures.¹⁹⁰ Further, figures used in biblical prophecy show that the symbolism of enemy nations as animals was present in ancient Northwest Semitic culture. Three unidentified nations or kings are referred to as a snake, a poisonous snake, and a flying venomous serpent in Isaiah 14:29; Egypt is referred to as a serpent-like chaos monster in Ezekiel 29:3; the king of Egypt is likened to a lion and to a serpent-like chaos monster in Ezekiel 32:2; an unidentified conquering nation is described as a lion in Joel 1:6; and various fearsome beasts, some of them composite like a griffin, symbolize kings of conquering nations in Daniel 7:3-7, 17.¹⁹¹ It would be overly speculative to guess what specific nations or ethnic groups the griffin, the lion, etc. might symbolize in the various art pieces we have examined; indeed, it is possible that the symbolism was purposely vague, the animals standing for undefined hostile foreign

¹⁹⁰ Keel, *Symbolism of the Biblical World*, 107-9.

¹⁹¹ On possible referents for the metaphor in Isaiah 14:29, see John H. Hayes and Stuart A. Irvine, *Isaiah the Eighth-century Prophet: His Times and His Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1987), 236-37; Joseph Blenkinsopp, *The Anchor Bible: Isaiah 1-39* (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 292-93. For general comments on this phenomenon in the Hebrew Bible, see P. T. Davies, "Animal Imagery," in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry and Writings*, ed. Tremper Longman III and Peter Enns (Nottingham: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 15-16, 19.

powers or for hostile foreign powers in general. However, whatever their precise interpretation, it is plausible that these animals were understood as symbols in this vein.¹⁹²

The association of cosmic features with nations in the Hebrew Bible is evident both in the context of the gesture phrases themselves and more generally. In Jeremiah 51:24-25, Babylon is explicitly addressed as a mountain against which Yahweh will extend his hand to destroy. Similarly, in Ezekiel 35:3, Mount Seir, against which Yahweh promises to extend his hand, stands for the whole of Edom (cf. verse 4, “I will make your cities a wasteland”). In Isaiah 8:7, the king of Assyria is described as “the mighty, swelling water of the river”; it is uncertain whether the image of Yahweh elevating his hand against the river later in this same pericope (Isaiah 11:15) refers back to this image, thus describing the destruction of Assyria, or whether it refers to the Euphrates or the Nile river (these options are not mutually exclusive).¹⁹³ It is well known that the Nile river is both a source and a symbol of Egypt’s prosperity and power, and this association is surely present in the plague narrative of Exodus, in which the first two plagues are inflicted on or by means of the river.¹⁹⁴ The image of Yahweh extending his hand against the sea in Isaiah 23:11 is in the context of an oracle against Tyre, and the image may be a figure of the destruction of Tyre itself, the image being occasioned by the close association of Tyre with the sea.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹² Cf. Markoe, *Bowls*, 46; Porada, “Cylinder Seal from Tell el-Dab‘a,” 487-88.

¹⁹³ Cf. Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: The English Text, with Introduction, Exposition, and Notes*, volume 1: Chapters 1 to 18 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 399-400; H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Isaiah, Volume I: Chapters 1-39* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1971), 225; John D. W. Watts, *Word Biblical Commentary: Volume 24, Isaiah 1-33*, revised edition (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 217. The NIV expansively translates *hannohor* here as “the Euphrates River.” The verb that is parallel to the gesture phrase here, *heh^eri^m*, literally “utterly destroy” or “put under the ban,” would be more appropriately used of political entities than of bodies of water. Similarly, the verb *hikkoh* “smite,” used in the next colon of the verse, may be used of smiting a river (as in 2 Kings 2:8) but is more commonly used to describe smiting a person or a group of people.

¹⁹⁴ Exodus 7:20, 28; 8:1-2; Judith E. Sanderson, in *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, ed. Michael D. Coogan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), Hebrew Bible, 93.

¹⁹⁵ The symbolism would thus be multilayered, the sea being linked both to Yahweh’s combat against chaos and to its use by Tyre as a source of commerce. Cf. Otto Kaiser, *Isaiah 13-39: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1974), 167, commenting on Isaiah 23:11: “The connection between this threatening gesture and

We have already touched on the symbolism of wild animals and untamed features of the cosmos as forces of chaos. The symbolic association of animals, particularly the hippopotamus and wildfowl, with the forces of chaos is a recognized aspect of ancient Egyptian art.¹⁹⁶ This kind of symbolism has also been claimed as a general feature of Near Eastern (including Levantine) culture and art, with the lion and various composite creatures having roles similar to that of the hippopotamus in Egypt.¹⁹⁷ In like fashion, some cosmic features, especially bodies of water, are frequently associated with the forces of chaos in Northwest Semitic literature, including Ugaritic narrative poetry and the Hebrew Bible (see table 17 above).¹⁹⁸

The difference between the choice of symbols in the artistic corpus versus the literary corpus (animals in art, cosmic features in literature) may be ascribed to different symbolic idioms that have developed within the two genres. Levantine iconography does include cosmic features being subdued by smiting god figures, but this is usually shown through relative vertical position rather than through the cosmic features being targets of the Fist Up gesture. Mountains and water, for example, are shown under the feet of the smiting figure, similar in position to the bull or lion on which the smiting figure is sometimes shown standing (cf. the “Baal au foudre” stela and the Iron Age stela from Atlit).¹⁹⁹

Therefore, the targets of the Fist Up gesture in art, which include humans and animals, may stand symbolically for enemy nations; in a more general way, they signify the forces of

the sea can be explained perhaps not only by the situation of the Phoenician cities, but also by the memory of the myth of Baal’s battle against the sea-god Yam, which in the Old Testament is transferred to Yahweh.”

¹⁹⁶ Wilkinson, *Symbol and Magic*, 177-79, 189. As Wilkinson points out, the animal hunt representative of the combat against chaos is both depicted and described in Egyptian sources in connection with the gesture of raising the hand.

¹⁹⁷ Keel, *Symbolism of the Biblical World*, 50-55, 85-89, 107-9; Porada, “Cylinder Seal from Tell el-Dab’a,” 487-88.

¹⁹⁸ Keel, *Symbolism of the Biblical World*, 49-50. Williams-Forte also argues that mountains can have a similar role in both literature and iconography, specifically in association with the netherworld beneath them: Williams-Forte, “Snake and the Tree,” 28, 33-34, 37-38.

¹⁹⁹ Fenton, “Baal au foudre,” 60; cf. Wilkinson, *Symbol and Magic*, 64.

chaos against which the god and his earthly representative(s) fight. This is compatible with the Targets of the gesture of destruction or exertion of supernatural power in literature, which include enemy nations and cosmic features. Wild animals and untamed cosmic features may be considered roughly equivalent sets of symbols in Northwest Semitic iconography and literature respectively.

4.2.7.5. Instrument

In the majority of examples of smiting god figures in ancient Levantine art, there is (or was originally) a weapon in the upraised hand. In many cases, the weapon is no longer fully extant, but the original existence of a weapon is firmly established due to traces that remain (such as a broken weapon shaft). Helga Seeden, in her book on smiting god figurines, posits that all of these figurines originally held weapons, even though many lack any trace of a weapon or are missing the raised hand.²⁰⁰ Others, too, occasionally assume the existence of a weapon in art pieces in which the raised hand is obliterated. However, there is abundant evidence that smiting god figures could have a raised fist with no weapon.²⁰¹ We shall discuss this evidence in turn.

Of the smiting god figurines in our corpus, there are seven in which the raised hand is fully extant but is unperforated, so that it would be impossible for the raised hand to carry a weapon: AUB 2544, Beirut KL 70.508, BM 20727, Damascus RS 21.120, Damascus RS 22.09, Louvre AO 17.236, and OI A 12627. The present writer has been able to personally examine two

²⁰⁰ Seeden, v, 3-4, 137, 142-43. Seeden varies between absolute and qualified statements on the armed nature of the figurines; for example, “The 1832 figurines included in the catalogue part share the following characteristics: they are all standing and either carried or still carry weapons; most of them wear helmets and are male” (v); “There is enough evidence from the figurines themselves to prove that they were usually armed” (137).

²⁰¹ Cf. Izak Cornelius, *The Iconography of the Canaanite Gods Reshef and Ba'al* (Fribourg: University Press, 1994), 256: “In nearly all of the cases the deities are shown with a weapon. Only on a few Reshef is weaponless, standing with only a raised hand. It does not matter if the figure is with or without a weapon, the fact is that the hand is raised in an aggressive and menacing *gesture* above the head” (emphasis in the original). It should further be noted that the weaponless raised fist is more frequent than Cornelius indicates, as we shall see in the discussion below.

of these: OI A 12627 (from an excavation at Tell el-Judeideh) and BM 20727 (from Tortosa, Spain). In both cases, the raised fist is finely cast with the fingers delineated, yet there is no trace of perforation (except for a shallow hole in the bottom of the fist in OI A 12627). Further, in the case of OI A 12627, the lack of perforation in the upraised hand may be contrasted with the clear and wide perforation in the lowered hand. These two figurines are shown in figures 4-7.



Figures 4-5 (top row). Figurine from Tell el-Judeideh (OI A 12627), front and back views.
Figures 6-7 (bottom row). Figurine from Tortosa (BM 20727), front and back views.
Author's photographs, used by kind permission of the Oriental Institute (figures 4-5)
and the Trustees of the British Museum (figures 6-7).

Seeden considers AUB 2544 to be a forgery solely on the basis of its lacking perforation in the upraised fist.²⁰² This seems to us to be a forced conclusion and to be unjustified in light of the evidence, both from the figurines and from other types of art pieces as adduced below. In addition to these figurines of which the raised hand forms an unperforated fist, one may also include the two figurines of which the raised hand appears to be purposely flattened, making it impossible to hold a weapon (Louvre AO 17.328, Louvre AO 17.330).

There are clear examples of stelae, cylinder seals, and Hyksos scarabs with no weapon in the upraised hand:

stelae: Damascus 4471, Damascus 6357. Total: 2.

cylinder seals: Aleppo M 6339 (bis), Aleppo M 6399, BLM 6876, BM 130652, Damascus 107, Damascus 2598, Damascus 2617, Damascus 2930, Louvre AO 14811, Louvre AO 14816, PLU (37), PLU (39), PLU (45), PLU (47). Total: 15.

scarab seals: Istanbul NN (4), Rockefeller 36.1614, PLU (48)-(50). Total: 5.

This evidence is especially convincing because the fact that the motif is rendered in relief or intaglio makes it obvious that the lack of a weapon is intentional. The stelae are most convincing, as the cutting away of the space around the hand definitely implies a decision not to depict a weapon. The stela Damascus 4471 from Ugarit, which is in relatively high relief, is a good example of this.²⁰³

²⁰² Seeden, 114 (no. 1744F).

²⁰³ In some cases of intaglio work, one could object that the piece is casually rendered or incomplete. In fact, there are seals in which the level of detail is so low that it is difficult to tell whether a line at the end of the arm is a weapon or the forearm. Nevertheless, there are enough well-executed and finished examples in which no weapon is depicted that the general fact is beyond doubt. It is noteworthy that the examples of a raised fist with no weapon, compared to those in which there is a weapon, tend to be executed with a less accomplished technique and to come from less affluent eras or environments. For example, the stelae from Ugarit which show the deity raising an empty fist, which are not very finely executed, may be contrasted with the “Baal au foudre” stela, which is of superb workmanship and which shows Ba‘lu raising a mace.

The possibility of the Fist Up gesture being executed with an empty fist in Levantine art compares well with the art of neighboring traditions. The Egyptian constellation *s3h*, corresponding to our Orion, is depicted facing a crocodile constellation with an upraised empty fist on the astronomical ceiling of Seti I.²⁰⁴ An Egyptian Rashap stela also shows the god with an upraised empty fist.²⁰⁵ An orthostat in the North Syrian tradition from the ancient citadel of Aleppo likewise shows the storm god raising his fist with no weapon.²⁰⁶ On a stamp seal in Mesopotamian style bearing an Aramaic inscription is shown an *ilu bīti* (“house god”) with a lion-headed figure called an *ugallu*, the two forming an apotropaic pair; the *ilu bīti* raises his hand in Fist Up but does not appear to have a weapon.²⁰⁷ Thus versions of the smiting god motif without a weapon in the upraised hand were fairly common, not only in the Levantine tradition but among its neighbors as well.

The weapons used in the Fist Up gesture in art, including the empty fist or lack of a weapon, may be compared with the weapons described in connection with the gesture of destruction or exertion of supernatural power in literature. Taking the body of Levantine art presented in this section as a whole, there are a total of 415 smiting god figures. Of these figures, 205 (about 49%) can be excluded due to uncertainty about whether a weapon was originally present in the upraised hand; these include cases in which the hand is missing or obscured, the hand is perforated but there is no surviving weapon, the level of detail is inadequate, or there is insufficient documentation. This leaves 210 examples (about 51%) in which the existence of a

²⁰⁴ Zahi Hawass, *The Royal Tombs of Egypt* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2006), 277; Cornelius, *ICGRB*, 256, fig. 61. The logographic writing of the name *s3h* in the 19th dynasty similarly shows the fist empty, but the later Greek logographic writing shows a rod or club in the upraised hand; see *WÄS* 4:22.

²⁰⁵ This stela is Cairo JE 71815. See Cornelius, *ICGRB*, 30-31, pl. 4 (no. RR5).

²⁰⁶ Guy Bunnens, *A New Luwian Stele and the Cult of the Storm-God at Til Barsib-Masuwari* (Louvain: Peeters, 2006), 130, 168, fig. 106 (catalogue no. 49).

²⁰⁷ Tallay Ornan, “The Mesopotamian Influence on West Semitic Inscribed Seals: A Preference for the Depiction of Mortals,” in *Studies in the Iconography of Northwest Semitic Inscribed Seals*, ed. Benjamin Sass and Christoph Uehlinger (Fribourg: University Press, 1993), 56-57 (no. 13); Avigad, *Corpus*, 300 (no. 802).

weapon is certain (although the type of weapon depicted may be doubtful) or the weapon is certainly lacking. Of these 210 examples—again, taking the corpus as a whole—the breakdown of weapons held in the upraised hand is as shown in table 18.

Table 18. Weapons Used in the Fist Up Gesture in Art

Weapon	Examples	Percent of total
mace	55	26.07%
none	31	14.69%
straight sword	23	10.90%
spear	17	8.06%
single-bladed axe	14	6.64%
club	7	3.32%
rod	5	2.37%
sickle sword	3	1.42%
dagger	2	.95%
double-bladed axe	2	.95%
throwstick	2	.95%
double-headed mace	1	.47%
hammer	1	.47%
plant-like object	1	.47%
uncertain weapon	47	22.27%

The various types of Levantine art objects of various periods contribute unequally to the data shown above. For example, most of the examples with a mace come from the cylinder seals, and more than half of the examples with a straight sword come from carved ivories. Clearly, the art works of different periods and genres within the broader Levantine tradition reflect slightly different conceptions of the smiting gods' attributes. Thus we should not expect the breakdown shown in table 18 to correspond exactly to the weapons mentioned in descriptions of the gesture in literature. Nevertheless, there are some general points of similarity, as can be seen by

comparing table 19 below. This table gives the weapons mentioned with gesture phrases in the contextual type of destruction or exertion of supernatural power. The weapon is sometimes described in the Instrument constituent of the full gesture phrase, or it may be mentioned in the wider context of the phrase. The table also includes the many instances in which no weapon is mentioned.²⁰⁸

Table 19. Weapons Used in Gesture of Destruction or Exertion of Supernatural Power in Literature

Weapon	Examples	Percent of total
none	39	69.64%
rod	13	23.21%
straight sword	3	5.36%
sickle sword	1	1.79%

The possibilities are roughly in the same order in the table as the corresponding possibilities in table 18, although the frequency of occurrence of the rod and the straight sword are reversed (the prominence of the rod in the textual corpus is due to its being part of a repeating motif in the plague narrative of Exodus). Different results may be obtained by limiting the iconographic data to one period or type of object. In fact, the closest match with the textual data is the metal smiting god figurines:

²⁰⁸ In general, it is assumed that the lack of mention of a weapon means that no weapon is used. This assumption, being based on silence, entails some degree of doubt. However, practically speaking, one would expect an author composing a phrase like “Yahweh extended his hand and smote the people” to include some mention of a weapon, either in the immediate phrase or in the larger context, if he or she intended the audience to understand that a weapon was used.

Table 20. Weapons of Smiting God Figurines Compared to Hebrew Bible

Weapon	Smiting god figurines	Hebrew Bible
none	9 (30.00%)	39 (69.64%)
rod	2 (6.67%)	13 (23.21%)
spear	2 (6.67%)	---
straight sword	1 (3.33%)	3 (5.36%)
sickle sword	1 (3.33%)	1 (1.79%)
double-bladed axe	1 (3.33%)	---
mace	1 (3.33%)	---
club	1 (3.33%)	---
uncertain weapon	12 (40.00%)	---

The smiting god motif in art thus shares with the gesture of destruction or exertion of supernatural power in literature the following features with respect to what is held in the upraised hand: (1) the upraised fist may be empty, and this is close to being the most frequent option in the corpus as a whole; (2) when not empty, the upraised fist holds a weapon such as a sword or a rod; (3) the order of frequency of which weapon is held in the hand is roughly similar.

4.2.7.6. Agent

We now turn to the issue of the agent of the Fist Up gesture. There is some variation in the corpus presented above as to the agent's gender; in addition, it is sometimes uncertain whether the agent is divine or human. This variation will be discussed below. Nevertheless, the great majority of figurines, stelae, seals, and other objects listed above show as the agent of the gesture a male deity who is generally identifiable as the storm god Hadad/Ba'lu or the warrior god Rashap.²⁰⁹ This compares well with the fact that the agent of the lifted-hand gesture of

²⁰⁹ Frankfort, *Cylinder Seals*, 124-27, 162-64; Collon, "Smiting God," 130-32; Seeden, 139-50; Yon, "Stèles de pierre," 281; Cornelius, *ICGRB*, 23-233.

destruction or exertion of supernatural power in Northwest Semitic texts, of which almost all the examples are biblical, is most often Yahweh. In ancient Israelite theology as represented in biblical texts, Yahweh was vested with many of the attributes that other Northwest Semitic religions had imputed to Ba‘lu.²¹⁰ Yahweh is also described as a mighty warrior, which is similar to descriptions and artistic renderings of Ba‘lu and Rashap.²¹¹ It therefore makes sense to imagine Yahweh raising his hand in the Fist Up gesture like Ba‘lu, and it is plausible to interpret phrases describing Yahweh’s uplifted hand of destruction as referring to this very gesture.

As was mentioned above, the agent in some examples of the Fist Up gesture appears to be a female deity. Twelve of the one hundred and seventy-seven figurines in our corpus (about 6.78%) apparently show females, usually with headdresses indicating their high status (Beirut B 11.921, Beirut B 12.679, Beirut KL 70.847, Beirut NN [1], IAA NN, Louvre AO 3276, Louvre AO 3889, Louvre AO 4049, Louvre AO 20.160, Louvre AO 22.265, Rockefeller 38.133, and PLU [22]). One cylinder seal also apparently shows a female in the “smiting god” pose (BM 131627), and the figure in many other cylinder seals is of uncertain gender due to the low degree of detail. Finally, the bronze axe head in the Beirut National Museum (see section 4.2.6) seems to show a female in the same pose. Thus, in Northwest Semitic art, it was not only Ba‘lu but also a goddess who could be depicted performing this gesture. Based on comparable representations from Egypt, this goddess may be identified as ‘Anatu, who appears in Ugaritic texts as Ba‘lu’s ally in war.²¹² As we have shown, general descriptions of deities’ combat against the forces of chaos in Ugaritic literature mention ‘Anatu as well as Ba‘lu. However, we lack any instance in which the Agent of an actual gesture phrase in this context is female. This is understandable

²¹⁰ Keel, *Symbolism of the Biblical World*, 210-18.

²¹¹ Keel, *Symbolism of the Biblical World*, 219-22.

²¹² Seeden, 106, 144-50; cf. *ANEP*, no. 473.

given that all of the relevant textual data come from the Hebrew Bible, which tends to focus on the deeds of the male deity Yahweh and on the deeds of other male protagonists.

There are also instances in which the agent of the Fist Up gesture is apparently human rather than divine. This is the case with all of the carved ivories discussed in section 4.2.3, both those which show a “hero” slaying a griffin or lion and those which show a figure resembling the Egyptian Pharaoh smiting captives. It is also the case with other art objects (especially Phoenician metal bowls) which show these same motifs. The Hyksos scarab Gitbud Collection NN, according to the interpretation of Keel, Keel-Leu, and Schroer, shows dancers and a worshipper imitating the Fist Up gesture of a god who is also shown; whether or not this specific interpretation holds, there are several figures in the same pose on this image, and it seems reasonable that one or more of them would be human.²¹³ Finally, a couple of Phoenician metal bowls show battle scenes in which a participant bearing no marks of divinity performs this gesture (BM 123053, Delphi 4463). The depiction of mortals as well as deities performing the destructive lifted-hand gesture, as well as the (perhaps intentional) blurring of distinctions between human and divine agents, is in harmony with literary examples of the gesture of destruction or exertion of supernatural power. This gesture is carried out by mortals (Moses and Joshua respectively) in the battle against the Amalekites (17:11-12) and the siege of the city of Ai (Joshua 8:18-19, 26); however, Yahweh was seen as being involved in these battles, ensuring Israel’s victories (Exodus 17:16; Joshua 8:1, 18). One may also compare Yahweh’s perceived role as warrior and agent of the extended-hand gesture in the overthrow of the Egyptian army at the sea, in which Moses was the human agent of the gesture (Exodus 14:30-31; 15:1-6, 12). Indeed, it is likely that the supernatural efficacy of the gesture, as performed by mortals in mundane settings in literature, was thought to derive in some way from the deity’s performance

²¹³ Keel, Keel-Leu, and Schroer, *Studien*, 264.

of the gesture in primordial and contemporaneous cosmic settings.²¹⁴ Therefore, the depiction of both deities and mortals performing the Fist Up gesture in art is consistent with the literary uses of the phrase *nṣṭṣ^h yṣd (bəl)* ‘*al-T* “extend the hand (with I) against T” and its synonyms.

4.2.7.7. Details of the Gesture

Finally, we turn to details of the gesture itself as depicted in art, comparing these details to those which can be discerned for the gesture of destruction or exertion of supernatural power in literature. In almost all instances, the Fist Up gesture appears to capture the point of maximum potential energy in the act of smiting—the hand is raised high, the legs spread, giving the impression that the release of energy is imminent and will be deadly.²¹⁵ While examples of the motif in two-dimensional art almost always show the head turned and the hand raised behind the head (following the Near Eastern convention of rendering the body in profile), the smiting god figurines, which are the only object type showing the smiting god motif in full round, typically show the head facing forward with respect to the trunk, the hand being raised to the side of the head. On a couple of stamp seals, the raised hand appears in front of the face rather than behind the head (JAI NN, BLM 1099g); this could be understood as the hand gathering momentum in the act of smiting, or it could simply be an alternate way of showing the hand raised to the side of the head.²¹⁶ In all of these cases, the raised position of the arm and hand is compatible with the verbs used for the gesture of destruction or exertion of supernatural power: *nṣṭṣ^h* “extend,” *šṣlah*

²¹⁴ Wyatt, “Arms and the King,” 870-71; David Calabro, “‘He Teaches My Hands to War’: The Semiotics of Ritual Hand Gestures in Ancient Israelite Warfare,” in *War and Peace in Jewish Tradition: From the Biblical World to the Present*, ed. Yigal Levin and Amnon Shapira (London: Routledge, 2012), 51-61.

²¹⁵ Cf. Sanders, “The Iconography of Baal of Ugarit,” 251.

²¹⁶ The figurine OI A 18331 similarly has the hand and weapon in front of the head; if this is indeed the original shape of the figurine, this would argue that the stamp seals with the hand in front of the head are not just an alternate form showing the hand to the side of the head.

“stretch out,” *hiṭṭō^h* “extend,” *heni^yp* “elevate,” *heri^ym* “raise,” *nōśō* “lift up,” *rōmō^h* “be high,” and *nōtan* “put forth.”²¹⁷

What is raised in the Fist Up gesture could be described as the hand or the arm, corresponding to the nouns *yōd* “hand, forearm” and *zōro^a* “arm” in phrases describing the gesture of destruction or exertion of supernatural power. Two of these phrases use the more specific noun *yōmi^yn* “right hand”: *nōṭō^h yōmi^yn* “extend the right hand” (Exodus 15:12) and *rōmō^h yōmi^yn* “of the right hand, be high” (Psalm 89:14). In examples of Fist Up in art, there are some indications that the right hand was the standard (or at least strongly preferred) hand for the gesture, even though there are examples in which the left hand is raised. First, across the Levantine corpus, the right hand is far more commonly shown in Fist Up than the left. This is what we expect, of course, since the dexterous hand would normally be the weapon-wielding hand in combat. Second, the proportion of figurines using the left hand is much lower than the proportion in two-dimensional renderings. Of the one hundred and seventy-seven figurines in our corpus, only four (about 2.26%) seem to be using the left hand. Third, in two-dimensional renderings (such as stelae, carved ivories, and glyptic art), the left hand is raised when and only when the figure itself is facing left. This suggests that the left hand is chosen as the raised one for compositional reasons.²¹⁸ In light of these considerations, the Fist Up gesture in art is compatible

²¹⁷ The word *forth* in the translation of *nōtan* should be understood in the sense of “outward, away from the body” and not necessarily in the sense of “forward.” Cf. the sense of *nōtan yōd* “put forth the hand” in Genesis 38:28, of a baby putting its hand forth out of the birth canal.

²¹⁸ Cf. Henriette A. Groenewegen-Frankfort, *Arrest and Movement: An Essay on Space and Time in the Representational Art of the Ancient Near East* (New York: Hacker Art Books, Inc., 1978), 7-8. Such sacrifices of realistic portrayal for the sake of composition are evident elsewhere; see, for example, Emily Teeter, *The Presentation of Maat: Ritual and Legitimacy in Ancient Egypt* (Chicago: Oriental Institute, 1997), 22. Interestingly, among the Nimrud ivories, there are six examples in which the sword or spear in the raised hand passes unnaturally behind rather than in front of the figure (Cleveland 68.45, IM 60532, IM 62661, IM 65318, IM 65471, UPenn 61.3.1). The purpose of this unnatural rendering could be to prevent the weapon from hiding the figure’s chest. However, one notes that the figure in each of these examples happens to be facing left and to be raising his left hand; this may suggest that the unnatural rendering is meant to compensate somehow for the unrealistic handedness of the figures. In each case, if the figure were turned around, with its back to the viewer and the right hand instead of the left in Fist Up, the weapon would naturally pass behind the figure from the viewer’s perspective. Other examples of

with phrases used to describe the gesture of destruction or exertion of supernatural power in literature. In both types of sources, one hand—characteristically the right—is extended and lifted.

In summary, all of the contextual aspects of the Fist Up gesture in Levantine art match the contextual type of the gesture of destruction or exertion of supernatural power in Northwest Semitic literature, and the Fist Up gesture itself is compatible with the set of phrases used to describe this gesture, namely *nɔʔɕ^h yɔd (bəI)* ‘*al-T* “extend the hand (with I) against T” and its synonyms. No other set of phrases known to us from Northwest Semitic texts may lay claim to the degree of contextual similarity with Fist Up that we have demonstrated for this set of phrases. The Fist Up gesture in Levantine art and the gesture of destruction or supernatural power in Northwest Semitic literature, both of which are very frequently attested in their respective corpora, are therefore one and the same. We will return to this gesture in chapter 5, reviewing the evidence from both texts and iconography in order to illuminate the gesture’s ritual functions.

4.3. Palm Out

Another very frequent gesture in Northwest Semitic iconography consists of one hand being extended forward, the elbow approximately to the square and the hand open with the palm to the front. As with Fist Up, this gesture is abundantly attested on metal figurines, stelae, and seals found throughout the Levant and dating from the Middle Bronze Age through the Iron Age. In addition, many examples of the gesture are attested in Phoenician ivory work from the Iron Age found at sites throughout the Levant and in the Assyrian palace at Nimrud. In descriptions of these objects in scholarly works, the gesture is typically referred to using function-terms, such

the same motif in the same style have the figure facing right, the right hand raised, and the weapon passing in front of the figure. See Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 96-97. Nevertheless, there is at least one example of a similar motif in which a right-facing figure’s weapon passes behind the figure: see Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 92 (no. S1196).

as “raising the hand in a gesture of benediction,” “raising the hand in greeting,” or “lifting the hand in adoration.”²¹⁹ However, as explained in the introduction to this chapter, we consider function-terms such as these to be unhelpful to an objective analysis, at least in the initial stages. We therefore refer to this gesture in descriptive terms as “Palm Out.”

4.3.1. Metal Figurines in Palm Out

Metal figurines of seated or standing personages in the Palm Out gesture have been excavated at Ugarit, Byblos, Hazor, Megiddo, Beth-shean, and Enkomi. These examples date from the Middle Bronze Age through at least the beginning of the Iron Age. In addition, an approximately equal number of examples has ended up in museums and private collections via the antiquities market. The total number of published examples is about thirty-eight, but some of these are poorly published; those included in this study are those for which we have found a published photograph and have been able to determine the provenance and/or the current whereabouts of the piece.

One particularly fine example of a seated deity figurine (Damascus 3573), excavated at Ugarit and dating to the Late Bronze Age, may serve to illustrate the Palm Out gesture as shown in this type of art object (figure 8).²²⁰

²¹⁹ Examples are legion; it will suffice to give only a couple of examples here. On the seated 'Ilu stela from Ugarit (Aleppo 4622, presented in section 4.3.2 below), 'Ilu's gesture is described by Pritchard as follows: “his left hand is upraised in a gesture of benediction” (*ANEP*, 307). The same gesture on the same stela is described by Caquot and Szyzyer as follows: “his left hand is raised in a gesture of welcome to the person who is standing in front of him” (André Caquot and Maurice Szyzyer, *Ugaritic Religion* [Leiden: Brill, 1980], 23). For further discussion of the use of these function-terms, see section 4.3.7 below.

²²⁰ C. F. A. Schaeffer, “Nouveaux témoignages du culte de El et de Baal a Ras Shamra-Ugarit et ailleurs en Syrie-Palestine,” *Syria* 43 (1966): 7-8, pl. 2; *ANESTP*, 352, 378 (no. 826); Negbi, 46-49, 114-19, 171 (no. 1442); Caquot and Szyzyer, *Ugaritic Religion*, 23, pl. 8a; Seeden, “Peace Figurines,” 116-17 (no. 23); Spycket, *Statuaire*, 341n224, pl. 223; Keel, *Symbolism of the Biblical World*, 206, fig. 284; Galliano and Calvet, *Royaume d'Ougarit*, 260 (no. 303). Spycket gives the Damascus museum number as 23394, but the more recent publication by Galliano and Calvet gives the number as 3573.

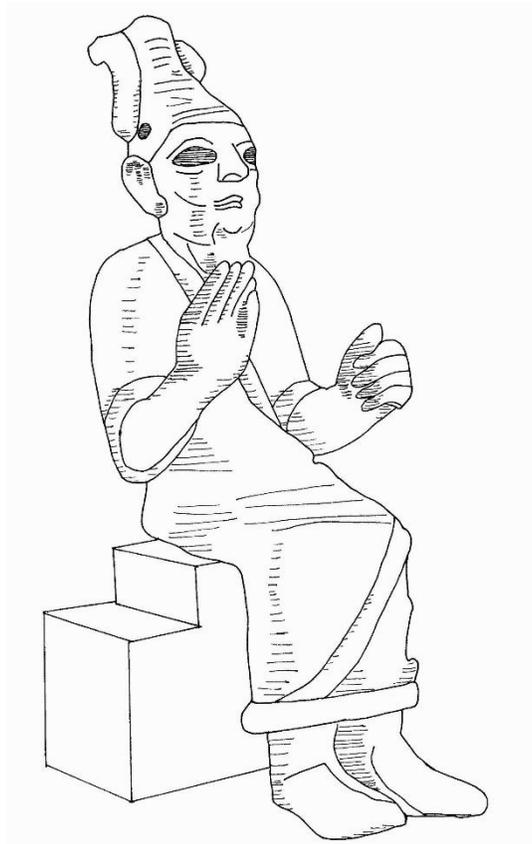


Figure 8. Figurine of seated deity in Palm Out, from Ugarit.
Drawn by the author after Schaeffer, *Syria* 43 (1966), pl. 2.

This example is of bronze with gold leaf. The other examples of this type are also of bronze, but the preservation of the gold leaf for this kind of object is very rare. The figure wears a headdress that is similar to the Egyptian *atef* crown; two holes in the sides of the headdress indicate that horns originally protruded from the sides. The figure makes the Palm Out gesture with his right hand. The left hand is forward and makes a fist, which is perforated, suggesting that the left hand originally held an object (perhaps a scepter). The throne on which the figure was originally seated is not preserved, but the tang by which the figure was fixed to the throne survives. Based on this figure's seated posture, the original presence of horns in his headdress, and the fact that

he is apparently an elderly male, he has generally been identified as the god 'Ilu, the chief god of the Ugaritic pantheon.²²¹

Other examples of this kind of object, included both seated and standing figurines, are described in the following list.

- Aleppo 4529 Ugarit / seated male with *atef* crown, **R in Palm Out**, L forward with fist, one tang under buttocks and tang under each foot / Schaeffer, "Fouilles de Ras Shamra-Ugarit," *Syria* 17 (1936): 126-28, pl. 15:3; Schaeffer, *Götter*, 67, fig. 12; Negbi, 46-49, 171 (no. 1441); Cornelius, *Many Faces*, 110, unnumbered plate (cat. no. 2.5).
- Beirut B 705 Byblos / seated male with *atef* crown, **R in Palm Out**, L forward with fist; throne, footstool, and platform preserved, tangs under platform / Negbi, 46-49, 171 (no. 1443); Seeden, "Peace Figurines," 115-16 (no. 20).
- Beirut B 7637 Byblos / seated male with conical headdress, **R in Palm Out**, L forward and broken / Seeden, "Peace Figurines," 113, 115 (no. 19).
- Berlin NN (1) Unknown provenance / seated male with conical headdress, **R in Palm Out**, L forward with fist / Müller, *Frühe Plastik*, 246, pl. 42 (nos. 409-10); Negbi, 46-49, 171 (no. 1439).
- Berlin NN (2) Unknown provenance / female with flat-topped headdress, standing, **R in Palm Out**, L forward with fist vertical / Müller, *Frühe Plastik*, 247, pl. 45 (no. 425); Negbi, 86-88, 185 (no. 1632).
- Damascus 3574 MB Ugarit / robed female with top of head missing, standing, **R in Palm Out**, L missing but originally forward, joined tangs under feet / Schaeffer, *Syria* 43 (1966): 5-7, pl. 3; Negbi, 86-88, 114-17, 185 (no. 1630); Caquot and Szyzner, *UR*, pl. 14a; Cornelius, *Many Faces*, 115, unnumbered plate (cat. no. 3.9); Galliano and Calvet, *Royaume d'Ougarit*, 268 (no. 315).
- Hazor NN Iron I Hazor / seated male with conical headdress, **R in Palm Out with hand lowered so that palm is nearly parallel to ground**, L forward with perforated fist vertical, tangs under feet and posterior / Yadin, *Hazor III-IV*, pl. 346.1-6; Negbi, 46, 50-53, 172, pl. 34 (no. 1454); *ANESTP*, 352, 379 (no. 833).
- IAA 69.10.128 Unknown provenance / seated female with cylindrical headdress, **R in Palm Out**, L forward with fist vertical, tangs under feet and posterior / Negbi, 90-93, 186, pl. 48 (no. 1646).

²²¹ Schaeffer, "Nouveaux témoignages," 7-8; Caquot and Szyzner, *Ugaritic Religion*, 23; Nicolas Wyatt, "The Stela of the Seated God from Ugarit," *UF* 15 (1983): 276-77.

- Louvre AO 1761 Unknown provenance / seated female with cylindrical headdress, **R in Palm Out**, L forward with fist vertical / Frankfort, *Art and Architecture*, pl. 144; *ANEP*, 161, 303 (no. 466); Negbi, 90-93, 186, pl. 47 (no. 1644); Spycket, *Statuaire*, 346-47.
- Louvre AO 2049 MB, P, near Jaffa / seated female with no discernible headdress, **R in Palm Out with hand lowered so that palm is nearly parallel to ground**, L forward with fist vertical / Negbi, 90, 93-94, 187, pl. 50 (no. 1650); Seeden, "Peace Figurines," 118.
- Louvre AO 2195 Unknown provenance / seated male with tall headdress, **R in Palm Out**, L forward with fist vertical, no tangs / Negbi, 46-49, 171, pl. 32 (no. 1438).
- Louvre AO 2701 Unknown provenance / female with horned sun disk headdress, standing, **R in Palm Out**, L forward with fist vertical / Negbi, 86, 88, 185, pl. 45 (no. 1633); Spycket, *Statuaire*, 427n350, pl. 277; Seeden, "Peace Figurines," 116, 118-19 (no. 25).
- Louvre AO 2770 Near Jezzin, Lebanon / seated male with conical headdress, **R in Palm Out**, L forward with fist vertical, tangs under feet and posterior / Negbi, 46-49, 171, pl. 34 (no. 1446); Spycket, *Statuaire*, 343n233, pl. 225.
- Louvre AO 10848 Unknown provenance (vicinity of Homs) / female with no discernible headdress, standing, **R in Palm Out**, L forward / Negbi, 86, 88-89, 186, pl. 46 (no. 1639).
- MMA 32.18.3 Unknown provenance / seated female with knobbed conical headdress, **R in Palm Out**, L forward with palm upward / Negbi, 90-93, 115-17, 186 (no. 1647).
- Nicosia NN Enkomi / seated male with no discernible headdress, **R in Palm Out**, L forward with fist vertical / Schaeffer, *Götter*, 65, fig. 9; Negbi, 46, 54-56, 174 (no. 1480).
- OI A 18355 LB Megiddo / seated male with conical headdress, **R in Palm Out**, L forward with fist vertical, tangs under feet and posterior / *ANEP*, 169, 307 (no. 495); Negbi, 46, 50-53, 117, 172, pl. 33 (no. 1451).
- PLU (59) Minet el-Beida / seated male with no discernible headdress, **R in Palm Out**, L forward with fist vertical, tang under posterior / Schaeffer, "Fouilles de Minet-el-Beida et de Ras Shamra," *Syria* 10 (1929): 288, pl. 54:1; Schaeffer, *Götter*, 69, fig. 14; Negbi, 46, 54-56, 173 (no. 1468).
- PLU (60) LB Beth-shean / seated male, heavily corroded, with no discernible headdress, **R in Palm Out**, L forward, tangs under feet and posterior / Alan Rowe, *The Four Canaanite Temples of Beth-Shan, Part 1: The Temples and Cult Objects* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1940), pl. 68a:9; Negbi, 46, 54-56, 173-74 (no. 1476).

Features of these figurines that show (or might once have shown) variation include the gender, the headdress, the posture (seated or standing), and what may have been in the non-gesturing hand. As to the gender, both male and female figurines are attested. It is interesting that the seated figurines may be male or female, but the four standing figurines are all female. However, it would be unwise to draw conclusions about this, given that there are so few standing figurines attested and that other types of objects do show standing male figures, some of whom are likely deities, in the Palm Out gesture. Headdresses of the figurines range widely: *atef*, conical, flat-topped, cylindrical, horned sun disk, or none at all. The two postures attested for these figurines are seated and standing; no examples of kneeling figures are found in this group of objects, although they are found in other types discussed below. Finally, although the object held in the non-gesturing hand is no longer extant for any of the figurines, most of them hold this hand forward and make a vertical fist, as if they once held a scepter. In the case of MMA 32.18.3, the hand is flat and the palm upward, perhaps in order to hold a cup or other object. These features are basically consistent with the other types of objects discussed below.

Every one of the figurines performs the Palm Out gesture with the right hand, indicating that this is the preferred hand for the gesture. In two-dimensional media, by contrast, the hand used for the gesture may vary. This will be discussed further in the contextual synthesis below.

4.3.2. Palm Out in Stone and Terracotta Relief Art

Seven stelae from the Levant show one or more figures in the Palm Out gesture. Four of these were excavated at Ugarit in contexts dating mostly from the Late Bronze Age (one is thought to be from the Middle Bronze Age), two others come from Byblos (one from the Iron

Age I and the other from the Persian Period), and one was acquired on the antiquities market near Tell Beit Mirsim.

Two of the stelae from Ugarit are illustrated in figures 9 and 10. The one shown in figure 9 (Aleppo 4622), dated to the Late Bronze Age, depicts a seated deity receiving homage from a standing figure.²²²

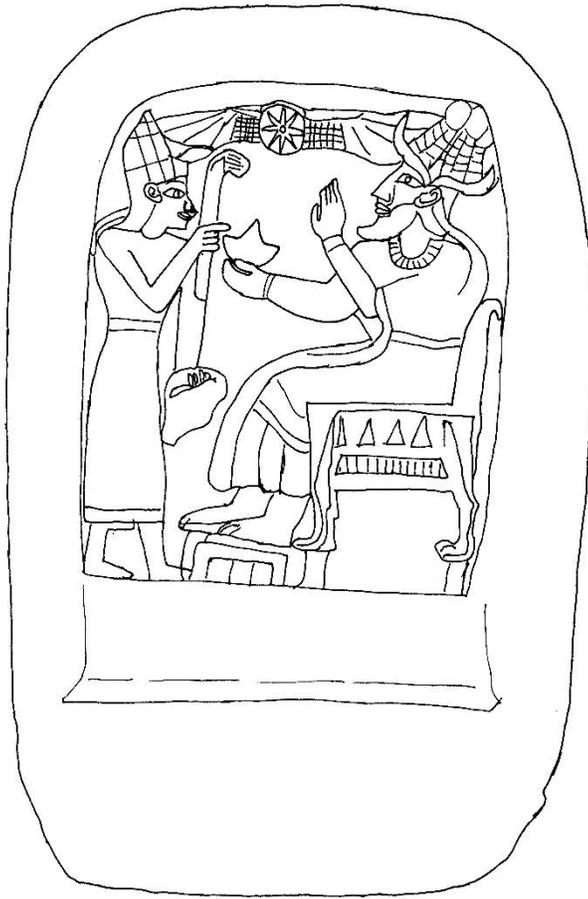


Figure 9. Stela of seated deity receiving homage, from Ugarit.
Drawn by the author after Galliano and Calvet, *Royaume d'Ougarit*, 165.

²²² ANEP, no. 493; Keel, *Symbolism of the Biblical World*, 206, fig. 283; Caquot and Sznycer, *UR*, pl. 7; Yon, *SP*, 305-7, 327, 336 (no. 10); Nicolas Wyatt, "The Stela of the Seated God from Ugarit," *UF* 15 (1983): 271-77; Galliano and Calvet, *Royaume d'Ougarit*, 164-65 (no. 148).

The seated deity has been identified as 'Ilu (like the figurine shown in figure 8 above), and the standing figure is perhaps the king of Ugarit.²²³ The seated deity wears an *atef* crown and sits on a throne with a footstool. His left hand is raised in Palm Out, while his right hand is extended forward, holding an object that looks like a semicircle with a triangular protrusion on top. This object was first identified by Schaeffer as an incense burner.²²⁴ Other suggestions have been made, and the current majority opinion is that the object in question is a cup.²²⁵ However, the identification as a cup does not account for the triangular projection at the top, and none of the proponents of this interpretation have addressed the significant iconographic parallels originally adduced by Schaeffer in support of his identification as an incense burner. We will return to this issue in the discussion of mythological parallels below (section 4.3.7.3), since one attempt to connect this scene with a mythological text depends on the identification of the object shown here in 'Ilu's outstretched hand. The standing figure facing the seated god is also male and wears a tall headdress bearing a uraeus. His right hand is forward and holds a ram-headed scepter, and his left hand is lowered and holds a jug. A winged sun disk stretches above the two figures. Scenes similar to this one continue in the iconography of the Iron Age, as is evident from parallels in carved ivories found at Nimrud and in stamp seals (see below).

Another Late Bronze Age stela from Ugarit (Aleppo 4818) is shown in figure 10. This stela is known in French publications as the "Stele de l'alliance" or "Stele du serment" and in English publications as the "Covenant Stela," since it is thought to depict two kings participating

²²³ C. F. A. Schaeffer, "Les fouilles de Ras Shamra-Ugarit: Huitième campagne (Printemps 1936), rapport sommaire," *Syria* 18 (1937): 131-32; Wyatt, "Stela of the Seated God," 274-75, 277. For a dissenting view of the figure on the left, see Pope, "Scene on the Drinking Mug from Ugarit," 405, who identifies this figure as the goddess Athiratu. As far as we are aware, this identification by Pope has not gained subsequent acceptance.

²²⁴ Schaeffer, "Huitième campagne," 130-31.

²²⁵ Jared J. Jackson and Harold H. P. Dressler, "El and the Cup of Blessing," *JAOS* 95 (1975): 100; David P. Wright, *Ritual in Narrative: The Dynamics of Feasting, Mourning, and Retaliation Rites in the Ugaritic Tale of Aqhat* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2001), 71-72, 71n8.

in a covenant ceremony.²²⁶ It shows two confronted standing figures performing the Palm Out gesture toward each other.



Figure 10. “Covenant Stela” from Ugarit.
Drawn by the author after Galliano and Calvet, *Royaume d’Ougarit*, 160.

The figure on the left is male; he wears a short and rounded headdress and is wrapped in a long robe. His left hand is in Palm Out, while his right is tucked into his robe. Facing him is another male, this one wearing a conical headdress. The second figure’s right hand is extended in Palm Out so that there is symmetry with the first figure, except that the second figure’s hand is slightly

²²⁶ C. F. A. Schaeffer, “Les fouilles de Ras Shamra-Ugarit: Septième campagne (Printemps 1935), rapport sommaire,” *Syria* 17 (1936): 114-19, pl. 14; *ANEP*, 199, 322 (no. 608); Keel, *Symbolism of the Biblical World*, 95-96, fig. 122; Yon, *SP*, 303-5, 327, 335 (no. 9); Galliano and Calvet, *Royaume d’Ougarit*, 160 (no. 143). The Aleppo museum accession number, 4818, is from Yon in Galliano and Calvet, *Royaume d’Ougarit*, 160; however, Yon in *SP* gives the number as 4418.

lower than that of the first figure, and his left hand is tucked into his robe. Between the two figures is a table bearing rectangular objects on which the figures' elbows rest. Above the scene are two drooping lotuses. The stela bears no inscription, so the assumption that it depicts a covenant ceremony cannot be confirmed. However, the two parties do appear to be of similar rank and yet different in some of their attributes, which would accord with the interpretation as a covenant between two kings, and the rectangular objects on the table could be tablets recording the covenant.²²⁷

The stela of Yahawwimilk from Persian-period Byblos (Louvre AO 22368) attests the continuity of one of the principal motifs in which the Palm Out gesture occurs, that of the deity receiving homage (compare the seated 'Ilu stela above, and see further below). It also provides valuable contextual information about this gesture, including an inscription that bears indirectly on the meaning of the gesture.²²⁸ This stela is shown in figure 11.

²²⁷ Schaeffer, "Septième campagne," 116-18. This suggestion in the original study by Schaeffer has won general acceptance; see, for example, Yon, *SP*, 304-5. In contrast, Schaeffer's second suggestion, which is that the scene shows a person making a funerary offering to his deceased relative or master ("Septième campagne," 118-19), has not, to our knowledge, been picked up by others. The second suggestion is based on the two drooping lotuses at the top of the scene, which may signify the funerary character of the scene; cf. Maurits van Loon, "The Drooping Lotus Flower," in *Insight through Images: Studies in Honor of Edith Porada*, ed. Marilyn Kelly-Buccellati (Malibu: Undena Publications, 1986), 245-52. However, Yon and others interpret the lotus (whether drooping or not) as a symbol of life; in scenes that are definitely funerary in character, such as the Ahiram sarcophagus mentioned by van Loon, it acts as a positive symbol pointing to the resurrection of the deceased. Overall, the "covenant" interpretation of the stela Aleppo 4818 seems more likely in view of the symmetry of the two figures, the dissimilarity of this stela to scenes that are more certainly funerary, and the similarity to scenes on cylinder seals (discussed below) that likely depict official transactions rather than funerary events.

²²⁸ *AOB*, no. 516; Maurice Dunand, "Encore la stèle de Yehawwimilk roi de Byblos," *Bulletin du Musée de Beyrouth* 5 (1941): 57-85; *ANEP*, 165, 305 (no. 477); John C. L. Gibson, *Textbook of Syrian Semitic Inscriptions*, vol. 3 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), 93-99, pl. 4; *KAI*, no. 10; Keel, *Symbolism of the Biblical World*, 329, pl. 26; Eric Gubel, "Une nouvelle représentation du culte de la Baalat Gebal?" in *Religio Phoenicia: acta colloquii Namurcensis habiti diebus 14 et 15 mensis Decembris anni 1984*, ed. Corinne Bonnet, Edward Lipiński, and Patrick Marchetti (Namur: Soc. des Études Classiques, 1986), 263-76.



Figure 11. Stela of Yahawwimilk from Byblos.
 Drawn by the author after Gibson, *Textbook*, vol. 3, pl. 4.

The stela shows a standing male figure (identified in the inscription as Yahawwimilk, the king of Byblos) with a Persian-style flat-topped headdress and robe, his right hand in Palm Out, his left hand forward with drinking bowl. Facing him is a seated female figure (identified as *b'lt gbl*,

“the Lady of Byblos”) with a vulture headdress surmounted by a horned sun disk, her right hand in Palm Out, her left hand forward and grasping a lotus-headed scepter. The throne on which she is seated is of Egyptian style, and the footstool on which she rests her feet resembles the Egyptian hieroglyph for *maat*, the principle of order and justice. A winged sun disk with uraei hovers above the two figures.

Data for the remaining four stelae are given in the following list.

- | | |
|-----------------|--|
| Beirut NN, lid | Byblos / male with no discernible headdress, standing, facing left, R in Palm Out , L forward with drooping lotus; opposite him is male figure with no discernible headdress, standing, facing right, L across chest with upright lotus, R tucked into robe / Contenau, <i>Manuel</i> , 2:1060-61. |
| Damascus 6356 | MB Ugarit / female with head obscured, standing, facing right, R in Palm Out , L forward with indistinct short object; in front of her is male figure with head obscured, striding to the right, holding bow in both hands / Yon, <i>SP</i> , 310-11, 327, 340 (no. 14). |
| Haifa K-65 | LB, P, near Tell Beit Mirsim / female with horned sun disk headdress, standing, facing right, R in Palm Out , L grasping long lotus plant / Cornélius, <i>Many Faces</i> , 115, unnumbered plate (cat. no. 3.8a). |
| Louvre AO 15775 | LB Ugarit / male with short and rounded headdress with tassel, standing on pedestal, facing right, R in Palm Out , L tucked into robe; he stands between spear and foremost leg of large smiting god figure / C. F. A. Schaeffer, “Les fouilles de Minet-el-Beida et de Ras-Shamra: Quatrième campagne (printemps 1932), rapport sommaire,” <i>Syria</i> 14 (1933): 123, pl. 16; C. F. A. Schaeffer, “La stèle du «Ba‘al au foudre» de Ras-Shamra (Musée du Louvre),” <i>Fondation Eugène Piot: Monuments et mémoires</i> 34 (Paris: Leroux, 1934), 10-13; C. F. A. Schaeffer, “La grande stèle du Baal au foudre de Ras Shamra,” in <i>Ugaritica II</i> (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1949), 129-30; Pierre Bordreuil, “Recherches ougaritiques, I: Où Baal a-t-il remporté la victoire contre Yam?” <i>Semitica</i> 40 (1991): 19-21; Yon, <i>SP</i> , 296-97, 331 (no. 5). |

One of these stelae, Louvre AO 15775 (the “Baal au foudre” stela from Ugarit), is illustrated in figure 2 above; the figure on this stela that is of interest in this section is the smaller one to the right of the smiting Baal.

We also mention here two terracotta reliefs, whose scenes are closely related to the stelae just presented. The first terracotta piece is a cult stand from Ugarit, which shows a male wearing a short, rounded headdress with a tassel, standing and facing right, his right hand in Palm Out and his left hand tucked into his robe.²²⁹ This figure is very similar to the one on the stela Louvre AO 15775 (the “Baal au foudre” stela), which is also from Ugarit. Above this figure on the cult stand hovers a winged sun disk. The second piece is a terracotta plaque of unknown provenance (Louvre AO 27197), which shows a seated female with a headband or short headdress, facing right, her right hand performing the Palm Out gesture with a bird perched on her hand, her left hand holding a lotus-headed scepter. Facing her is a standing male figure with a flat-topped headdress, his left hand in Palm Out, his right hand forward and holding a bowl as if to present it to the seated figure. Above them is a lintel supported by two columns, and depicted on the lintel is a winged sun disk.²³⁰ As noted by Gubel, this scene is very similar to the one on the Yahawwimilk stela from Byblos.²³¹ An important difference, however, is that the hands of the standing figure on the right are reversed, so that the hand performing Palm Out is always closest to the viewer.

Some varying elements of the context of the Palm Out gesture in these stelae and terracotta reliefs are the same as in the figurines discussed above: the gender of the figure performing the gesture, his/her headdress, his/her posture (seated or standing), and what (if anything) is held in the other hand. Of the nine figures shown on the stelae in this section, six are male and three are female. The range of headdresses worn by these figures very closely matches

²²⁹ The cult stand’s excavation number is RS 78.41 + 81.3659. Bordreuil, “Baal contre Yam,” 21-22 (fig. 3); Yon, *SP*, 296-97, 332 (fig. 12e).

²³⁰ E. Gubel, “Une nouvelle représentation du culte de la Baalat Gebal?” in *Religio Phoenicia: acta colloquii Namurcensis habiti diebus 14 et 15 mensis Decembris anni 1984*, ed. Corinne Bonnet, Edward Lipiński, and Patrick Marchetti (Namur: Soc. des Études Classiques, 1986), 263-76; Markoe, *Phoenicians*, 128.

²³¹ Gubel, “Nouvelle représentation.”

the figurines discussed in the previous section: *atef*, conical, horned sun disk, and flat-topped. In addition, the figure who appears on the left side of the Ugarit “Covenant Stela,” in front of the smiting god on the “Baal au foudre” stela, and on the terracotta cult stand wears what appears to be a short and rounded headdress or skull cap. This figure, whose non-gesturing hand is always tucked into his robe, occurs frequently in the overall corpus; he has usually been identified as a ruler.²³² As with the figurines, the figures on stelae are either seated or standing. Objects held in the non-gesturing hand include a lotus plant, a lotus-headed scepter, and a drinking bowl. The significance of these varying elements will be brought out in the contextual synthesis below, in the discussion of the agent of the gesture.

In addition to these varying elements, which hand it is that performs the gesture shows some variation. In most examples, it is the right hand that is in Palm Out. However, Aleppo 4622 and 4818 show figures performing the gesture with the left hand. In both of these instances, the left hand seems to be chosen for compositional reasons. In Aleppo 4622, as Schaeffer and Wyatt have noted, the two hands of the seated figure appear as if they have been switched; thus the thumb of the extended right hand is visible, while it would have been behind the cup in a realistic portrayal.²³³ This may be a hint that the hands would be reversed in a real-life performance of the gesture, or it may simply be for the purpose of maximum representation. In Aleppo 4818, the fact that the figure on the left performs the gesture with his left hand gives symmetry to the composition.

Unlike the figurines, two-dimensional media such as stelae often show the figure performing the Palm Out gesture as part of a larger scene. One scene type that occurs frequently

²³² Schaeffer, “Quatrième campagne,” 123, pl. 16; Schaeffer, “Septième campagne,” 116 (the reference to the figure on the right is a mistake for the figure on the left); Bordreuil, “Où Baal a-t-il remporté la victoire,” 19-21; Yon, *SP*, 296-97, 304. See further below, sections 4.3.4 and 4.3.6.

²³³ Schaeffer, “Huitième campagne,” 130n5; Wyatt, “Stela of the Seated God,” 276-77.

in the overall corpus is that of the seated deity receiving homage from a standing figure. In this type of scene, either figure or both figures may be in Palm Out. The figure on the terracotta cult stand from Ugarit may be related to this type of scene, given the cultic function and location of the piece, even though a target is not represented on the piece itself (the target could be understood as the deity before whom the cult stand is placed). In the case of the similar figure on the “Baal au foudre” stela, it may be that there is a more general implied target—for example, if this figure is the king of Ugarit, the target could be the people whom he governs under the sanction and protection of Ba‘lu (the gigantic smiting god who stands behind and overshadows the king).²³⁴ However, the target is unlikely to be Ba‘lu himself in this case, since the smaller figure’s back is turned toward the god.²³⁵

4.3.3. Carved Ivories Showing Palm Out

Among the carved ivories excavated at the Iron Age II Assyrian fortress of Nimrud are many pieces that show the Palm Out gesture. These pieces belong to the Phoenician and Syrian styles and show many iconographic similarities to stelae and seals of local Levantine manufacture; thus these ivories may be interpreted within a Northwest Semitic cultural context. In particular, the scenes of the seated figure in Palm Out and the standing or striding figure in the same gesture resonate with other Northwest Semitic pieces, both in overall composition and in matters of detail. In addition, there are several examples of a kneeling figure in Palm Out;

²³⁴ This would agree with Schaeffer’s conclusions regarding the identity of the smaller figure and the message communicated by his presence on the stela. See Schaeffer, “Quatrième campagne,” 123; Schaeffer, “La stèle du «Ba‘al au foudre»,” 10-13; Schaeffer, “La grande stèle du Baal au foudre,” 129-30. The majority of scholars have essentially followed these conclusions regarding the smaller figure.

²³⁵ Cf. Schaeffer, “Quatrième campagne,” 123; Schaeffer, “La stèle du «Ba‘al au foudre»,” 11; Schaeffer, “La grande stèle du Baal au foudre,” 129.

although examples with this pose do not occur in figurines or on stelae, many examples from glyptic art will be seen in section 4.3.4.

Ivories showing seated and standing figures in Palm Out are illustrated in figures 12 and 13 respectively. Figure 12 shows an example of the seated figure rendered in the Syrian style; this ivory (excavation number ND 6352) was last known to be at the Iraq Museum in Baghdad.²³⁶

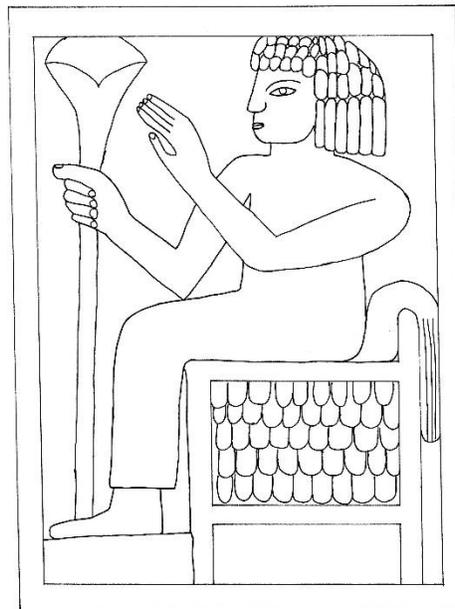


Figure 12. Nimrud ivory showing seated figure in Palm Out.
Drawn by the author after Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, no. S0660.

The figure has a tightly braided hairdo but apparently lacks a headdress. He sits on a throne furnished with a footstool. In his right hand, he holds a scepter whose head resembles a lotus bud. In her analysis of this piece (like other pieces showing the same scene), Georgina Herrmann says that the figure “grasps a lily growing on a long stalk with the right hand and salutes it with the left.”²³⁷ This assumes that the target of the figure’s Palm Out gesture is the scepter held in his

²³⁶ IN III, 104, pl. 92 (no. 77); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 56 (no. S0660).

²³⁷ Georgina Herrmann in IN III, 104.

other hand. However, it is likely that the presence of a human target farther to the left is implied. This may be seen by comparing this scene with the stela of the seated god from Ugarit and examples from glyptic art, in which the seated figure faces a standing figure who renders homage. Here it may be noted that the ivory shown in figure 12 was found in context with one piece showing a standing figure facing right, his right hand extended and holding a ram-headed scepter, and his left hand lowered and holding a jug, exactly like the figure on the left in the stela of the seated god from Ugarit.²³⁸ It is possible, though it cannot be proven, that these ivory panels were meant to be mutually coordinated so that the seated figure would face the standing attendant. This would then provide a close parallel to the scene represented on the Ugarit stela about six centuries earlier. Even if this panel is not part of a coordinated set, it could, perhaps, be viewed as an abbreviation of a larger scene in which the seated figure faces a human addressee, similar to stamp seals of the same era on which scenes of seated figures receiving homage appear in abbreviated forms.²³⁹ In any case, then, the gesture of the seated figure could have an implied human target.

Figure 13 shows a standing or striding figure in Phoenician style. This piece was acquired from the British Institute for the Study of Iraq by the British Museum in 2011 (accession number

²³⁸ See Mallowan and Herrmann in IN III, 106-7, pl. 95 (no. 87). Cf. Herrmann, IN IV, nos. 337, 350, 351, and 357. Mallowan, in *Nimrud and Its Remains*, 2:506, points out parallels for the standing attendant with jug and ram-headed scepter among plaques from Arslan Tash and coins from Sidon; on the basis of the Arslan Tash plaques, Mallowan suggests that “the focal point of the scene was perhaps a winged *uraeus*.” However, although the comparison with the seated ’Ilu stela from Ugarit involves a greater time gap, it has the advantage that the seated deity motif is actually attested among the ivories found at Nimrud, including some in the same context as the standing attendant.

²³⁹ The full scene could be reduced either to the seated deity (who typically faces left) or the standing mortal (who typically faces right). In Levantine seals, the latter is much more common. Examples of the full scene do rarely occur on Phoenician seals, making the connection between the full and abbreviated versions more obvious. Cf. Eric Gubel, “The Iconography of Inscribed Phoenician Glyptic,” in *Studies in the Iconography of Northwest Semitic Inscribed Seals*, ed. Benjamin Sass and Christoph Uehlinger (Fribourg: University Press, 1993), 118-21; Tallay Ornan, “The Mesopotamian Influence on West Semitic Inscribed Seals: A Preference for the Depiction of Mortals,” in Sass and Uehlinger, *Studies in the Iconography*, 52-53, 60-65, 68-71.

BM 2011.6001.477).²⁴⁰ It was found in room SW37 of the Assyrian fortress (excavation number ND 9461), in a different room from figure 12, which comes from room SW7.

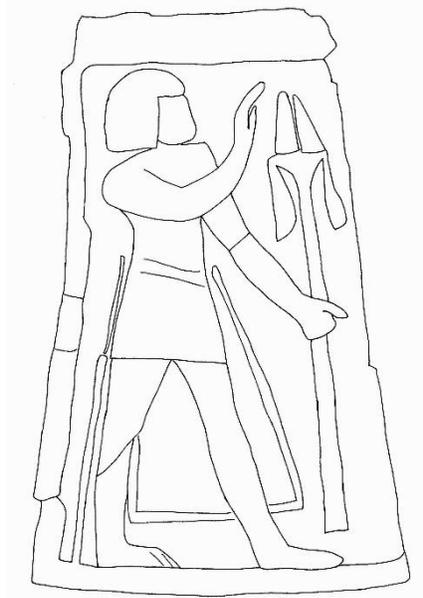


Figure 13. Nimrud ivory showing standing figure in Palm Out.
Drawn by the author after Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, no. S0967.

Like the seated personage in figure 12, this standing figure wears no headdress. However, that this standing figure is of high rank is suggested by the scepter that he holds in his left hand, which bears two *maat* feathers.

The remainder of ivories from the Nimrud fortress that show seated, standing, and kneeling figures in Palm Out are summarized in the list below.

Ashmolean 1957.224 Iron II Nimrud (ND 6386) / male with no discernible headdress, seated on throne with footstool, facing left, **L in Palm Out**, R forward and grasping lotus scepter / IN III, 104, pl. 93 (no. 79); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 57 (no. S0662).

Ashmolean AM 1962.9 Iron II Nimrud (ND 10361) / falcon-headed male, seated on Egyptian-style throne, facing left, **L in Palm Out**, R forward and grasping scepter (mostly missing) / IN IV, 193, pl. 251 (no. 963); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 140 (no. S1907).

²⁴⁰ IN IV, 76, pl. 5 (no. 26); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 77 (no. S0967).

- BISI NN (1) Iron II Nimrud (ND 8059) / male with Blue Crown, lower body missing (probably standing or kneeling), facing left, **L in Palm Out**, R forward and holding small Maat-like figure / Mallowan, *Nimrud and Its Remains*, 2:567-68 (no. 512); IN IV, 200, pl. 258 (no. 1002); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 142 (no. S1946).
- BISI NN (2) Iron II Nimrud (ND 6354) / male with no discernible headdress, seated on throne with footstool, facing left, **L in Palm Out**, R forward and grasping lotus scepter / IN III, 105, pl. 93 (no. 80); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 57 (no. S0663).
- BM 118120 Iron II Nimrud / male with wig but no headdress, seated on Egyptian-style throne, facing right, **R in Palm Out**, L forward with *was* scepter; before him is cartouche with hieroglyphic inscription and with *maat* feathers above; symmetrical seated male figure opposite / Barnett, *CNI*, 151-52, 177, pl. 8 (no. C48); IN VI, 161-62, pls. 22, C (no. 146).
- BM 118141 + 118154 Iron II Nimrud / two fragments, possibly originally from one piece: (1) male with headdress (partly missing), standing, facing right, **R likely in Palm Out (hand missing)**, L forward and probably grasping tall lotus plant (mostly missing); (2) male with head missing, standing, facing left, **L in Palm Out**, R forward and grasping tall lotus plant / IN VI, 152, pl. 17 (no. 106).
- BM 118146 Iron II Nimrud / male with headdress (partially missing), standing, facing left, **L in Palm Out**, R forward and grasping tall lotus plant / IN VI, 152, pl. 17 (no. 105).
- BM 118147 Iron II Nimrud / male with uraeus headdress, standing, facing left, **L in Palm Out**, R forward and grasping tall lotus plant / Barnett, *CNI*, 171, pl. 3 (no. C4); IN VI, 151, pl. 17 (no. 102).
- BM 118148 Iron II Nimrud / male with uraeus headdress, standing, facing right, **R in Palm Out**, L forward and grasping tall lotus plant / Barnett, *CNI*, 171, pl. 3 (no. C1); *ANEP*, 39, 265 (no. 132); IN VI, 150, pls. 16, E (no. 99).
- BM 118149 Iron II Nimrud / male with uraeus headdress, standing, facing right, **R in Palm Out**, L forward and grasping tall lotus plant / IN VI, 151, pl. 16 (no. 101).
- BM 118150 Iron II Nimrud / male with uraeus headdress, standing, facing left, **L in Palm Out**, R forward and grasping tall lotus plant / IN VI, 152, pl. 17 (no. 104).
- BM 118151 Iron II Nimrud / male with uraeus headdress, standing, facing left, **L in Palm Out**, R forward and grasping tall lotus plant / IN VI, 151-52, pl. 17 (no. 103).
- BM 118152 Iron II Nimrud / male with uraeus headdress, standing, facing right, **R in Palm Out**, L forward and grasping tall lotus plant / IN VI, 150-51, pl. 16 (no. 100).

- BM 118164 +
123855 Iron II Nimrud / male with wig but no headdress, seated on Egyptian-style throne, facing left, **L in Palm Out**, R forward with staff or scepter (top missing); before him is cartouche with hieroglyphic inscription (largely missing); symmetrical seated male figure, now missing, may originally have been on left side of cartouche / Barnett, *CNI*, 177 (nos. C49-50); IN VI, 162-63, pls. 22, C (no. 147).
- BM 130853 Iron II Nimrud (ND 768) / female with horned sun disk headdress, standing, facing left, **R in Palm Out**, L forward and grasping lotus-headed scepter / M. E. L. Mallowan, "The Excavations at Nimrud (Kalḫu), 1949-1950: Ivories from the N. W. Palace," *Iraq* 13 (1951): 17-18, pl. 7; Barnett, *CNI*, 189, pl. 14 (no. M1); IN VI, 215, pl. 103 (no. 346).
- BM 132917 Iron II Nimrud (ND 7568) / **hand in Palm Out**, facing left, as part of composite scene including scarab and frontal lion faces; rest of figure to whom hand belongs is missing / Mallowan, *Nimrud and Its Remains*, 2:557-58 (no. 496); IN V, 82, pl. 41 (no. 197); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 22 (no. S0204).
- BM 132946 Iron II Nimrud (ND 10562) / male with falcon head and sun disk and cobra above head, standing, facing right, **R in Palm Out**, L forward but mostly obscured; before him is a *serekh*, on the other side of which is an ibis-headed male who inscribes the *serekh* with a quill or stylus / IN IV, 108, pl. 55 (no. 255); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 92 (no. S1197).
- BM
2011.6001.444 Iron II Nimrud (ND 9300) / male with Double Crown, kneeling, facing right, **R in Palm Out**, L forward and grasping *was* scepter (partially missing, head and bottom of shaft still extant); before him are remnants of winged scarab (mostly missing); scene takes place on reed boat / IN V, 103, pl. 66 (no. 313); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 32 (no. S0327).
- BM
2011.6001.478 Iron II Nimrud (ND 9462) / falcon-headed male with no easily discernible headdress (possibly sun disk, but doubtful from photo), standing, facing right, **R in Palm Out**, L forward and grasping scepter / IN IV, 75, pl. 4 (no. 20); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 77 (no. S0961).
- BM
2011.6001.619 Iron II Nimrud (ND 10433) / male with falcon head and partially-discernible disk above head, standing, facing right, **R in Palm Out**, L forward and grasping scepter / IN IV, 76-77, pl. 6 (no. 33); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 77 (no. S0974).
- BM
2011.6001.685 Iron II Nimrud (ND 10640) / falcon-headed male with sun disk above head, standing, facing right, **R in Palm Out**, L forward and grasping *was* scepter / IN IV, 75, pl. 4 (no. 25); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 77 (no. S0966).
- BM
2011.6001.686 Iron II Nimrud (ND 10641) / male with falcon head and sun disk above head, standing or striding, facing left, **R in Palm Out**, L forward and grasping drooping lotus scepter or plant / IN IV, 105, pl. 50 (no. 237); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 91 (no. S1179).

- Brussels 0.2648 Iron II Nimrud (ND 7685) / male with falcon head and no discernible headdress, standing, facing right, **R in Palm Out**, L forward and grasping scepter or spear / IN IV, 102, pl. 46 (no. 211); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 89 (no. S1153).
- IM 60510 Iron II Nimrud (ND 6328) / winged male with falcon head and sun disk with cobra above head, standing, facing right, **L in Palm Out**, R grasping stalk of plant held over shoulder / IN V, 133, pl. 103 (no. 496); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 47 (no. S0513).
- IM 60526 Iron II Nimrud (ND 6353) / male with Egyptian-style hairdo but no discernible headdress, seated on throne with footstool, facing left, **L likely in Palm Out but badly broken**, R forward and grasping what appears to be branching lotus plant / IN III, 104, pl. 92 (no. 78); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 57 (no. S0661).
- IM 60536 Iron II Nimrud (ND 6388) / male with elaborately curled hair but no discernible headdress, seated on throne with footstool, facing left, **L likely in Palm Out but badly broken**, R forward and probably grasping lotus scepter or plant (badly broken) / IN III, 105, pl. 93 (no. 81); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 57 (no. S0664).
- IM 65182 Iron II Nimrud (ND 9351) / male with partially discernible disk above head, standing or striding, facing left, **R in Palm Out**, L forward and grasping scepter surmounted by *maat* feathers / IN IV, 76, pl. 7 (no. 29); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 77 (no. S0970).
- IM 65335 Iron II Nimrud (ND 10448) / procession of five striding figures facing right, of which the third is male with wig and Double Crown, **R in Palm Out**, L extended forward to present object that is now missing (most of L missing, but elbow is extant and shows that forearm is upward as if to present object and not downward as if to grasp scepter); fourth figure is male with horned sun disk headdress, **R possibly in Palm Out but hand missing**, L entirely missing / IN IV, 190, pls. 243-44 (no. 941); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 138 (no. S1884-85).
- IM 65347 Iron II Nimrud (ND 10476) / male with falcon head and no discernible headdress, standing, facing right, **R probably in Palm Out but with hand missing**, L lifted slightly forward with hand missing / Mallowan, *Nimrud and Its Remains*, 2:591-92 (no. 571); IN IV, 209, pl. 277 (no. 1062).
- IM 65466 Iron II Nimrud (ND 10312) / female with horned sun disk headdress, standing, facing right, **R in Palm Out**, L forward and grasping *renpet* scepter; before her is Harpokrates on lotus, facing right; symmetrical standing female figure opposite / IN IV, 198, pl. 257 (no. 995); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 142 (no. S1939).
- IM 65876 Iron II Nimrud (ND 10659) / male with sun disk above head, standing, facing right, **R in Palm Out**, L forward and grasping scepter with tall-plumed head / IN IV, 107, pl. 53 (no. 247); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 92 (no. S1189).

- IM 74825 Iron II Nimrud (ND unregistered) / female figure with lion head, top of head missing, standing, facing right, **R in Palm Out**, L forward and grasping lotus scepter; before her is Harpokrates on lotus; symmetrical standing female figure opposite with much of head and R missing / IN IV, 198-99, pl. 257 (no. 996); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 142 (no. S1940).
- IM NN (4) Iron II Nimrud (ND 9361) / male with falcon head and sun disk flanked by uraei above head, standing, facing left, **R in Palm Out**, L forward and grasping scepter with tall-plumed head / IN IV, 76, pl. 6 (no. 32); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 77 (no. S0973).
- IM NN (5) Iron II Nimrud (ND 10620) / male with wig and Double Crown (partially missing), lower body missing, facing left, **R in Palm Out**, L missing but possibly grasping spear or lotus scepter with closed bud (head or bud extant in front of figure); behind him is another figure that is mostly missing, facing left, **R in Palm Out**, L missing but possibly grasping spear or lotus scepter with closed bud (head or bud extant in front of figure) / IN V, 118, pl. 84 (no. 403); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 39 (no. S0419).
- IM NN (6) Iron II Nimrud (ND 10620) / broken piece showing torso and arms of male or female figure with hair or part of headdress descending below shoulders, standing, facing right, **R in Palm Out but with most of hand missing**, L forward and probably grasping papyrus scepter or plant (mostly missing) / IN V, 118, pl. 84 (no. 405); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 39 (no. S0421).
- IM NN (7) Iron II Nimrud (ND 11009) / male with uraeus Double Crown, seated on Egyptian-style throne, facing left, **L in Palm Out**, R forward and holding *wedjat* eye / Mallowan, *Nimrud and Its Remains*, 2:552-53 (no. 491).
- IM NN (8) Iron II Nimrud (ND 11101) / female with sun disk headdress, standing, facing left, **L in Palm Out**, R missing; border of panel indicates that this is right side of panel, so there may have been symmetrical figure opposite / Mallowan, *Nimrud and Its Remains*, 2:548 (no. 480).
- IM NN (9) Iron II Nimrud (ND 12034) / male with headband, kneeling, facing right, **R in Palm Out**, L forward and holding bowl containing small Maat-like figure; before him is cartouche containing hieroglyphs (reading uncertain), topped by *atef* crown, flanked by outward-facing uraei, and resting on *nebu* sign; symmetrical male figure in Palm Out opposite / Mallowan, *Nimrud and Its Remains*, 2:546-47 (no. 478).
- IM NN (10) Iron II Nimrud (ND 12146) / two identical male figures with no headdresses, kneeling, facing left, **L in Palm Out**, R forward with palm upward, supporting feet of ram-headed winged sphinx with Double Crown that stands above them / Mallowan, *Nimrud and Its Remains*, 2:548-49 (no. 483).

- IM NN (11) Iron II Nimrud (ND unregistered) / male figure with top of head missing, probably standing (lower body missing, but angle of L likely implies standing posture), facing right, **R in Palm Out**, L forward with forearm missing / IN IV, 213, pl. 285 (no. 1092); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 148 (no. S2037).
- MMA 58.31.4 Iron II Nimrud (ND 6309) / male with no discernible headdress, standing, facing right, **R in Palm Out**, L forward but mostly missing / IN V, 130, pl. 99 (no. 480); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 46 (no. S0497).
- MMA 61.197.12 Iron II Nimrud (ND 10534) / male with lion head and partially-discernible sun disk and uraeus, standing, facing left, **R in Palm Out**, L forward and grasping plumed scepter; before him is lotus plant on which sits monkey, facing left / Mallowan, *Nimrud and Its Remains*, 2:571-72 (no. 524); IN IV, 118, pl. 76 (no. 336); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 98 (no. S1278).
- MMA NN (1) Iron II Nimrud (ND 11024) / two identical male figures with no headdresses, kneeling, facing right, **R in Palm Out**, L forward with palm upward, supporting feet of ram-headed winged sphinx with Double Crown that stands above them / Mallowan, *Nimrud and Its Remains*, 2:548-49 (no. 484).

Five of the pieces in the above list (Ashmolean 1957.224, BISI NN [2], IM 60526, IM 60536, IM NN [7]) are like the piece in figure 12, showing a seated male that may once have faced a standing attendant (who would have been shown on a separate piece). Eight of the pieces in the list (from BM 118141 + 118154 to BM 118152) show a standing male grasping a tall lotus plant in the non-gesturing hand. Herrmann, in her descriptions of these pieces, assumes that the lotus plant is actually the target of the Palm Out gesture.²⁴¹ However, compared to our overall corpus, it would be very unusual for a target of the Palm Out gesture to be simultaneously grasped by the one performing the gesture. It seems preferable to assume that the target of the gesture in these cases lies outside the individual piece, perhaps being shown on a separate coordinated piece or else implied in the real or imaginary space surrounding the piece. Similarly,

²⁴¹ To give one example, in her description of BM 118148, Herrmann writes that the figure “grasps the stalk of a plant with the left hand, the right is raised in salutation to the lotus flower” (IN VI, 150; cf. descriptions on following pages).

the kneeling figures in IM NN (10) and MMA NN (1), who hold up the paws of a ram-headed winged sphinx with one hand while performing the Palm Out gesture with the other, may be oriented toward a target that is either on a separate piece or is to be located in imaginary space outside the composition.²⁴²

Aside from these cases in which the target of the gesture is not shown on the individual piece, several examples include a definite target. In all of these examples, a pair of figures face inward toward a central motif, to which they perform the Palm Out gesture. These examples can be divided into three categories based on the type of the central motif. In the first category, the central motif is a cartouche bearing a hieroglyphic inscription (BM 118120, BM 118164 + 123855, IM NN [9], and possibly IM 65335 [cartouche now missing]). Related to this category is one example (BM 132946) in which a pair of figures flank a central *serekh* that bears illegible Egyptian-like characters; only one of the figures is in Palm Out, while the other inscribes the *serekh*. In the second category, the central motif is a scarab beetle with or without wings (BM 132917, BM 2011.6001.444). Finally, in a couple of examples, the central motif is the figure of the child Horus (Harpokrates), who sits on a lotus (IM 65466, IM 74825).

The agent of the Palm Out gesture in ivories from Nimrud may be seated, standing, or kneeling. The seated figures are always male (among these ivories, though not in the corpus as a whole) and are most likely deities. The divine status of the seated figure is indicated by various features, of which all examples have at least two; these features include the seated posture on a throne, the holding of a scepter in the non-gesturing hand, the wearing of a crown, and the head

²⁴² Joel LeMon, *Yahweh's Winged Form in the Psalms* (Fribourg: Academic Press, 2010), 92-94, suggests that the kneeling figures on these pieces are shown as being "under the domination" of the sphinx; the kneeling figures' gesture may thus "be reminiscent of the plea for mercy—a gesture of fear, reverence, and submission evident in so many representations of sphinxes trampling humans." For this latter type, in which the target of the gesture is also ambiguous, see below. We are not certain whether LeMon means to suggest that the sphinx in IM NN (10) and MMA NN (1) is actually the target of the gesture; if so, then this would be problematic, since the agents' palms are not directed toward the sphinx. If the gesture does indeed express "fear, reverence, and submission," then it would appear to be rendered to another entity, perhaps a deity, toward which the sphinx and the kneeling figures face.

being that of a falcon. In two examples, the seated figures face cartouches bearing hieroglyphic inscriptions, and these inscriptions may also support the idea that the figures are deities (for detailed discussion, see section 4.3.7.2 below). The standing figures include four types: (1) falcon-headed males, (2) one lion-headed female, (3) human-headed females with horned sun disks on their heads, and (4) human-headed males. The first three types appear to be divine, as their appearance corresponds to Egyptian deities.²⁴³ However, it is reasonable to suppose that some of the fourth type, especially human-headed males who face and appear to be rendering homage to a divine symbol, are mortal rather than divine beings. The kneeling figures are all male and are all most likely mortal beings (given their humble posture and lack of unambiguously divine characteristics). Figures in all three postures, whether divine or human, may be doing one of three things with the non-gesturing hand: holding a scepter or staff, grasping a large stationary plant, or presenting an object, as shown in table 21.

²⁴³ The falcon-headed god, who occurs either with a sun disk headdress or without any headdress, corresponds to the Egyptian gods Re-Horakhty and Horus. The lion-headed female corresponds to the goddesses Bastet and Sakhmet. The human-headed female with the horned sun disk headdress is similar to Hathor; Mallowan suggests that this figure represents Astarte, the Phoenician counterpart of Hathor. See M. E. L. Mallowan, "The Excavations at Nimrud (Kalhu), 1949-1950: Ivories from the N. W. Palace," *Iraq* 13 (1951): 17-18, pl. 7.

Table 21. Types of Figures in Palm Out in Ivories from Nimrud

	NGH holding scepter	NGH grasping plant	NGH presenting object
seated figure	Ashmolean 1957.224, Ashmolean AM 1962.9, BISI NN (2), BM 118120 (2x), BM 118164 + 123855, IM NN (ND 6352)	IM 60526	IM NN (7)
standing figure	BM 130853, BM 2011.6001.477, BM 2011.6001.478, BM 2011.6001.619, BM 2011.6001.685, BM 2011.6001.686, Brussels 0.2648, IM 65182, IM 65466, IM 65876, IM 74825, IM NN (4), MMA 61.197.12	BM 118141 + 118154 (2x), BM 118146, BM 118147, BM 118148, BM 118149, BM 118150, BM 118151, BM 118152	IM 65335
kneeling figure	BM 2011.6001.444	---	IM NN (9) (2x)

Note: NGH stands for Non-Gesturing Hand.

The one configuration for which there are no extant examples, as indicated by the triple dash (---) in the table, is the kneeling figure grasping the plant. It would be risky to ascribe significance to this lacuna, since some other configurations (including the other that have a kneeling figure) are attested only once.

There are also some motifs including the Palm Out gesture that are only attested on carved ivories. In one of these, a man in the Palm Out gesture is being trampled by a sphinx.²⁴⁴ This type is shown in figure 14, an ivory last known to be at the Iraq Museum in Baghdad (excavation number ND 13084).²⁴⁵

²⁴⁴ Joel LeMon argues, against Gubel, that this motif expresses domination rather than protection. See LeMon, *Yahweh's Winged Form*, 90-92. In addition to the sources cited by LeMon, see Gubel, "Iconography of Inscribed Phoenician Glyptic," 108.

²⁴⁵ IN IV, 86, pl. 21 (no. 92); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 81 (no. S1034).

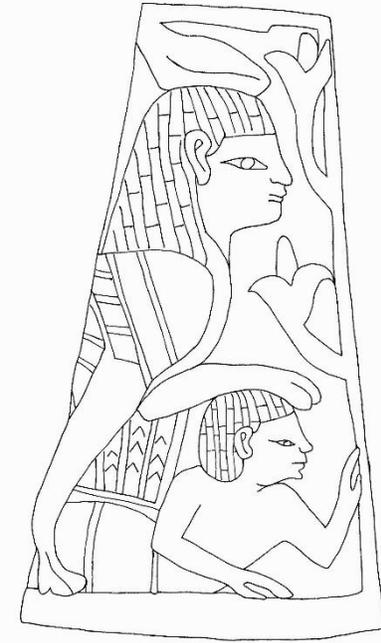


Figure 14. Nimrud ivory showing man in Palm Out being trampled by griffin.
Drawn by the author after Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, no. S1034.

As with the ivories showing a standing figure grasping a tall lotus plant, Herrmann assumes that the plant motif that forms the right border of the piece is the target of the sprawling figure's Palm Out gesture.²⁴⁶ In this case, the assumption may be correct, since the figure is not grasping the plant. However, it is also possible that the gesture has no target or is directed toward something that lies outside the individual piece.

The other examples of this type, in which the trampling animal may be a sphinx or a griffin (that is, a winged lion having a human head or a bird head respectively), are summarized in the list below.

²⁴⁶ Herrmann in IN IV, 86: "The man lies on his side and rests on the fingers of the left hand, the right is raised to the trunk of the tree."

- Birmingham
451'65g Iron II Nimrud (ND 10561) / male with no discernible headdress, prostrate, facing left, **R in Palm Out**; trampled by griffin with Double Crown, whose right forepaw holds *maat* feather and rests on first figure's head / IN IV, 85, pl. 20 (no. 87); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 81 (no. S1029).
- BM
2011.6001.365 Iron II Nimrud (ND 8171) / male with no discernible headdress, prostrate, facing left, **R in Palm Out**; animal paw on his head, rest of animal missing / IN V, 73, pl. 31 (no. 146); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 17 (no. S0150).
- BISI NN (3) Iron II Nimrud (ND 9195) / male with no discernible headdress, prostrate, facing right, **L in Palm Out**; trampled by winged sphinx with Double Crown, whose left forepaw rests on first figure's head / IN IV, 86, pl. 21 (no. 91); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 81 (no. S1033).
- IM 62667 Iron II Nimrud (ND 7983) / male with no discernible headdress, prostrate, facing left, **R in Palm Out**; trampled by griffin with Double Crown, whose right forepaw holds *maat* feather and rests on first figure's head / IN IV, 87, pl. 23 (no. 96); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 82 (no. S1038).
- IM 65371 Iron II Nimrud (ND 10543) / male with no discernible headdress, prostrate, facing right, **L in Palm Out**; trampled by griffin with Double Crown, whose left forepaw holds *maat* feather and rests on first figure's head / IN IV, 85, pl. 20 (no. 88); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 81 (no. S1030).
- IM 65393 Iron II Nimrud (ND 10644) / male with no discernible headdress, prostrate, facing right, **L in Palm Out**; trampled by griffin with Double Crown, whose left forepaw holds *maat* feather and rests on first figure's head / IN IV, 86-87, pl. 22 (no. 95); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 82 (no. S1037).
- MFA 65.918 Iron II Nimrud (ND 10707) / male with no discernible headdress, prostrate, facing right, **L in Palm Out**; trampled by griffin with Double Crown, whose left forepaw holds *maat* feather and rests on first figure's head / IN IV, 86, pl. 22 (no. 94); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 82 (no. S1036).
- ROM 959.91.6 Iron II Nimrud (ND 7680) / male with no discernible headdress, prostrate, facing left, **R in Palm Out**; trampled by griffin with Double Crown, whose right forepaw rests on first figure's head / IN IV, 86, pl. 20 (no. 90); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 81 (no. S1032).

In another motif attested only on carved ivories from Nimrud, an Egyptian-like *wedjat* eye has an arm that makes the Palm Out gesture. There are twenty-one ivory pieces showing this

motif, all of which pieces are equestrian bridle harness ornaments (blinker and face-piece ornaments).²⁴⁷ Since the variation in this motif from one piece to the next is minimal and relatively insignificant for our purposes, an illustration of just one piece (ND 10676) will suffice to present this type (figure 15).²⁴⁸

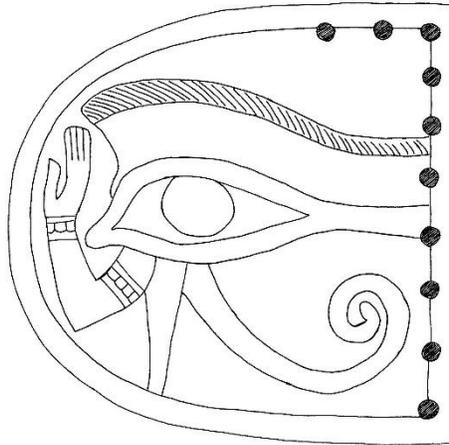


Figure 15. Ivory horse fitting showing *wedjat* eye with human hand in Palm Out. Drawn by the author after Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, no. S0719 (chipped portion on lower edge reconstructed).

What the nature of these pieces might imply about possible targets of the Palm Out gesture is a matter of speculation. If these pieces were designed to outfit war horses (either for actual battle or, more likely in view of the precious materials involved, for display), then the imagined context of the gesture might be combative, with the gesture being directed toward enemies; the gesture could thus be connected with the numinous and destructive power of the *wedjat* eye.²⁴⁹ However, more benign uses are also possible. Since there is no evidence with which to argue on this point, it is best to leave it open.

²⁴⁷ IN I = J. J. Orchard, *Equestrian Bridle-Harness Ornaments* (Aberdeen: British School of Archaeology in Iraq, 1967), 1-4, 26-27, pls. 2-4, 6, 27.

²⁴⁸ Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 60 (no. S0718-19).

²⁴⁹ Cf. Richard H. Wilkinson, *Reading Egyptian Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1992), 42-43.

4.3.4. Palm Out in Glyptic Art

Large corpora of Syrian-style cylinder seals have been excavated at the Bronze Age cities of Alalakh and Ugarit, and among these are many examples showing the Palm Out gesture in various contexts. These well-published corpora are the main basis of our presentation in this section. In addition, we include some seals excavated at Emar and others of uncertain provenance.

The cylinder seal shown in figure 16 is from Late Bronze Age Ugarit (RS 26.[501]).²⁵⁰

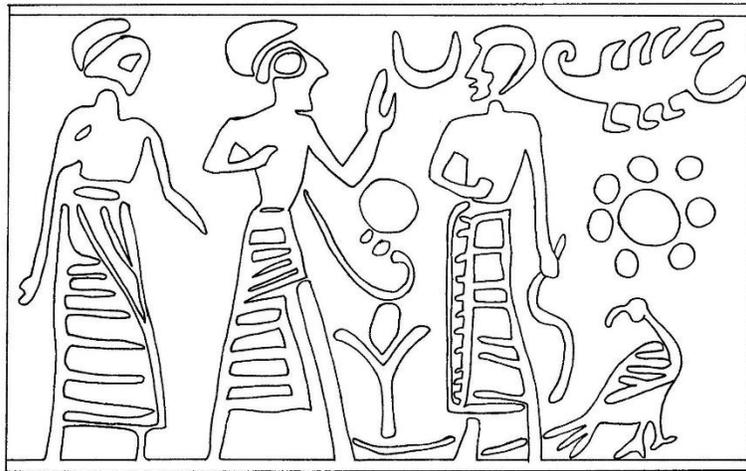


Figure 16. Cylinder seal from Ugarit showing standing figure in Palm Out.
Drawn by the author after Amiet, *SC*, 105.

In this scene, a male figure without a headdress stands, facing right, his left hand in Palm Out and his right hand held close to his chest. Above his left hand is a crescent moon, and underneath it are a sun disk and plant. Facing this figure and an attendant who follows him is another standing figure, this one holding his right hand against his abdomen and holding a sickle sword in his lowered left. In the field adjacent to this trio are a scorpion, a group of globules in the form of a rosette, and a bird.

²⁵⁰ Amiet, *SC*, 94, 105 (no. 225).

The following list shows the other cylinder seals in our corpus.

- Aleppo 4765 LB Ugarit / nude female, standing, in frontal view; flanking and facing her are two standing figures: falcon-headed male with sun disk headdress, facing right, **L in Palm Out** with arm almost horizontal and scorpion below, R to the side; male or female with short conical headdress and long robe, facing left, **R in Palm Out** with forearm almost vertical, L tucked into robe; outside this trio is male with spiked helmet, standing, facing right, R in Fist Up, **L in Palm Out** / Amiet, *SC*, 72, 80 (no. 154).
- Aleppo M. 996 P, Syria / falcon-headed male with Double Crown, standing, facing right, **L in Palm Out** with *ankh* sign below, R to the side; facing him is male with long robe and no discernible headdress (either bald or with skull cap or short rounded headdress), standing, **R in Palm Out**, L tucked into robe; traces of star above confronted figures' gesturing hands; behind second figure is male with double-feathered headdress, standing, facing left, R forward and grasping staff or scepter, L to the side / Hammade, 92-93 (no. 171).
- Aleppo M. 4528 P, Syria / two left-facing standing figures approaching right-facing standing figure: first left-facing figure is male or female with no discernible headdress, **R in Palm Out** with smaller man below, L to the side; second left-facing figure is winged male with tall horned headdress, **R in Palm Out** with fish below, L to the side; star above the two facing figures / Hammade, 80-82 (no. 152).
- Amman NN Iron II Tell es-Sa'idiyeh / male or female with pointed headdress, standing, facing left, **R in Palm Out**, L to the side; before him/her is male or female figure seated on throne, R holding cup, facing left towards an offering table loaded with food / *ANESTP*, 19, 41-42 (no. 859).
- Antakya 3206 (1) (= 7322, 7327, 7960-61; BM 131648) MB Alalakh / male with long robe and traces of round-topped headdress, standing, facing left, **R in Palm Out**, L tucked into robe; facing him is standing goddess with L extended and holding axe (blade turned inward) / Collon, *SITA*, 15 (no. 14).
- Antakya 7318 (3) (= 7322) MB Alalakh / male with horned headdress (top missing), standing, facing right, **L in Palm Out**, R at torso and grasping mace; he faces sacred tree (partially missing) / Collon, *SITA*, 24 (no. 28).
- Antakya 7318 (4) (= 7900; BM 131449A) MB Alalakh / male with round-topped headdress, standing, facing right, **R in Palm Out**, L forward and grasping staff; facing him are goddess with horned headdress, holding out *ankh* sign to him, and smaller goddess with horned headdress, in Palms In / Collon, *SITA*, 9 (no. 6).
- Antakya 7876 (1) (= 7900, 7960-61, 9732) MB Alalakh / male with long robe and round-topped headdress, standing, facing left, **R in Palm Out**, L tucked into robe; facing him is standing winged male or female deity with L extended and holding axe (blade turned inward) / Collon, *SITA*, 15-16 (no. 15).

- Antakya 7900 (2) MB Alalakh / male with long robe, headdress mostly missing but probably tall with rounded top, standing, facing left, **R in Palm Out**, L tucked into robe; before him are traces of another figure / Collon, *SITA*, 18 (no. 18).
- Antakya 7900 (3) (= 7960-61; BM 131648) MB Alalakh / male with long robe and traces of round-topped headdress, standing, facing left, **R in Palm Out**, L mostly missing but apparently tucked into robe; facing him is standing goddess who extends L in uncertain gesture (only partially extant) / Collon, *SITA*, 40 (no. 63).
- Antakya 7992 Alalakh / male with rounded headdress, kneeling, facing right, **L in Palm Out**, R across torso; facing him is male with rounded headdress, kneeling, facing left, **R in Palm Out**, L across torso; between them is altar with crescent top / Collon, *ACS*, 95, unnumbered plate (no. 75).
- Antakya 8009 Alalakh / winged male with tall horned headdress, standing, facing left, **R in Palm Out**, L on torso; facing him are smiting god and Syrian goddess figures; behind winged male is smaller bald-headed figure with robe, facing left / Collon, *ACS*, 54-55, unnumbered plate (no. 20).
- Antakya 9103 LB Alalakh / female with wig or short headdress, standing, facing right, **L in Palm Out**, R to the side; facing her is male with rounded headdress, standing, R forward and holding axe, L to the side and holding sickle sword; above and between the two figures is sun disk in crescent / Collon, *SITA*, 102-3 (no. 193).
- Antakya 10302 LB Sabuniye / male or female with conical headdress, seated, facing left, **R in Palm Out**, L held close to chest; facing him/her is male with horned short headdress, standing, **L in Palm Out**, R folded across chest and holding bow; in field between the two figures are (from top to bottom) star, plant sign flanked by crosses, and tepee-shaped sign / Collon, *ACS*, 124-25, unnumbered plate (no. 114).
- Ashmolean 1895.180 P, MB Syria / male with no discernible headdress, standing, facing right, **L in Palm Out from which lotus bloom seems to emanate**, R grasping staff; before him are fish and lion, both facing right / Buchanan, *AM* 1, 199-200, pl. 62 (no. 1010).
- Ashmolean 1913.336 P, Syria / male or female with no discernible headdress, seated, facing left, **R in Palm Out** with unidentified object (perhaps fish) below, L held close to torso; before him/her is offering table on which are pieces of flatbread; on other side of table is female with horned headdress, standing, facing right, L forward in uncertain gesture (Palm In or Palm Sideways) with jar on stand below, R held close to torso; between the two figures and above the offering table is winged sun disk / Buchanan, *AM* 1, 196, pl. 61 (no. 992).
- Ashmolean 1913.554 P, Syria / male with no headdress, standing, facing left, **R in Palm Out**, L laid on torso; before him are two confronted male figures, kneeling and grasping snakes / Buchanan, *AM* 1, 173, pl. 56 (no. 887).

- Ashmolean 1920.24 P, Syria / progression of three standing or striding left-facing figures toward right-facing nude female standing on bull; second left-facing figure is male or female with no discernible headdress, **R in Palm Out** with uncertain object (perhaps star) above and traces of uncertain object (perhaps bird) below, L to the side; third left-facing figure is winged male or female with bird head and faint traces of headdress, **R in Palm Out** with circle (perhaps top of *ankh* sign) below, L to the side / Buchanan, *AM* 1, 173, pl. 56 (no. 884).
- Ashmolean 1920.52 P, Syria / main register: winged male deity, standing, facing left, holding spear and curved weapon; facing him is male with tall conical headdress, standing, facing right; behind winged deity is female with tall two-horned headdress, standing, facing left, **R in Palm Out** with star above, L on torso; smaller register: male or female with rounded headdress and long robe, standing, facing left, **R in Palm Out**, L on torso or tucked into robe; behind him is right-facing standing figure / Buchanan, *AM* 1, 172, pl. 55 (no. 878).
- Ashmolean 1921.1188 P, Syria / male with no headdress, kneeling, facing right, **L in Palm Out**, R to the side; facing him is male with no headdress, kneeling, **R in Palm Out**, L to the side; single *ankh* sign between the figures so that it is below their palm-outward hands; winged sun disk hovers above scene / Buchanan, *AM* 1, 174, pl. 56 (no. 888).
- Ashmolean 1952.129 P, MB Syria / two right-facing standing figures approaching left-facing standing figure: first right-facing figure is male with no discernible headdress (possibly skull cap), **R in Palm Out** with falcon wearing Double Crown below, L tucked into robe; second right-facing figure is male with White Crown, **L in Palm Out** with monkey below, L to the side; winged sun disk above the two facing figures; sun disk and moon crescent above the two approaching figures / Buchanan, *AM* 1, 177, pl. 56 (no. 905); Aharon Kempinski, "The Middle Bronze Age," in *The Archaeology of Ancient Israel*, ed. Amnon Ben-Tor, transl. R. Greenberg (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 199, fig. 6.31.
- BM 130652 Alalakh / male or female with short horned headdress, standing, facing right, **L in Palm Out**, R on torso; facing him/her is smiting god / Collon, *ACS*, 75, unnumbered plate (no. 48).
- BM 131487 LB Alalakh / falcon-headed male with tall two-plumed headdress, standing, facing right, **R in Palm Out** with *ankh* sign above, L forward and grasping *was* scepter; before him is male with no discernible headdress, standing, facing right, R forward and grasping scepter; facing these two figures is ram-headed male with *atef* crown, standing, R in uncertain hand gesture (probably Palm Out) with *ankh* sign below, L to the side and grasping weapon or scepter / Collon, *SITA*, 103-4 (no. 194).
- Damascus 2532 LB Ugarit / confronted standing figures flanking tree; first figure is male whose head resembles animal with mane, facing right, **L in Palm Out**, R to the side; second figure is male with conical headdress, facing left, **R in Palm Out**, L to the side / Amiet, *SC*, 114-15, 119 (no. 274).

- Damascus 2598 LB Ugarit / male with no discernible headdress, standing, facing right, **L in Palm Out**, R to the side; facing him is winged sphinx; winged sun disk above them / Amiet, *SC*, 71, 78 (no. 145).
- Damascus 2668 LB Ugarit / male with conical horned headdress, standing or striding, facing right, **L in Palm Out** with bird above, R to the side; before him are three quadrupeds, one leaping towards him and the others standing and facing away from him / Amiet, *SC*, 159, 163 (no. 374).
- Damascus 2725 LB Ugarit / male with no discernible headdress, standing or striding, facing left, **R in Palm Out** with *ankh* sign below, L to the side; before him are griffin and gazelle, both facing left / Amiet, *SC*, 43, 47 (no. 78).
- Damascus 2756 MB Ugarit / procession of two left-facing figures of which the first is male with short kilt and no discernible headdress; second figure is male with long robe and no discernible headdress, standing or striding, **R in Palm Out with fingers pinched together**, L held close to body / Amiet, *SC*, 27, 30 (no. 35).
- Damascus 2841 LB Ugarit / male or female with plumed headdress, seated, facing right, **L in Palm Out**, R not clearly visible; before him/her is large offering table atop which are two crescent-shaped pieces of bread; on other side of table are two standing male or female figures with no discernible headdresses, facing left, the foremost of whom raises R high in uncertain gesture; globules in the field above seated and standing figures may represent solar disks or stars / Amiet, *SC*, 92, 103 (no. 213).
- Damascus 2896 LB Ugarit / procession of two right-facing figures approaching left-facing man holding spear, behind whom is rampant griffin; first figure is female with no headdress, standing or striding, facing right, **L in Palm Out** with globule (perhaps sun disk) below, R to the side / Amiet, *SC*, 123, 125 (no. 289).
- Damascus 2898 LB Ugarit / male with tall round-topped headdress, facing right, **L in Palm Out** with bird above, R to the side and grasping curved weapon (possibly sickle sword or throwstick); before him is stylized tree motif; opposite him is symmetrical figure **in Palm Out** with bird above, behind whom is another standing male with horned headdress, tail, and animal legs, facing left, in Palms Out / Amiet, *SC*, 75, 83 (no. 172).
- Damascus 2924 LB Ugarit / male or female with short rounded headdress, seated, facing right, **R in Palm Out**, L extended forward; before him/her is short offering table with nothing on it; behind him is male with rounded headdress, standing, facing right, R to the side, L not visible (perhaps tucked into robe); before seated figure, on other side of the offering table, are two standing figures, facing left: the first is male with short conical headdress, R forward in uncertain gesture (Palm Sideways or making fist), L to the side; the second is female with no discernible headdress, both hands to the side and making fists; between seated figure and first left-facing figure, and above offering table, is crescent with concave side up; between two left-facing figures, at face level, is sun disk in crescent / Amiet, *SC*, 93, 104 (no. 218).

- Damascus 3000 LB Ugarit / male or female with no discernible headdress, seated, facing left, **R in Palm Out**, L extended forward; before him/her is offering table atop which is crescent with concave side up (plus other items including spear) / Amiet, *SC*, 158, 162 (no. 368).
- Damascus 3016 MB Ugarit / male figure with no discernible headdress (possibly skull cap) and long robe, standing or striding, facing left, **R in Palm Out** with large *ankh* sign below and flower or sun disk above, L tucked into robe; before him is male figure in Fist Up, facing left; facing them is Syrian goddess holding cup / Amiet, *SC*, 27, 30 (no. 39).
- De Clercq 389 Unknown provenance / falcon-headed male with Double Crown, standing, facing right, **R in Palm Out**, L forward and grasping uncertain object (perhaps top of scepter); facing him is male with no headdress, standing, R forward and grasping *was* scepter, L to the side; field between these figures and behind left figure is filled with various animals and hieroglyphs / Collon, "Green Jasper," 58, 65, pl. 22 (no. 4); Keel, "Jaspis-Skarabäen-Gruppe," 213 (no. 4).
- Louvre A 906 Unknown provenance / male with short and rounded headdress, standing, facing right, **R in Palm Out** with *ankh* sign above and inscribed cartouche surmounted by bird below, L tucked into robe; behind him is female with no discernible headdress, standing, facing right, **L in Palm Out** with *ankh* sign above, R to the side / Collon, "Green Jasper," 59, 67, pl. 22 (no. 11);²⁵¹ Keel, "Jaspis-Skarabäen-Gruppe," 215 (no. 11).
- Louvre AO 13163 LB Ugarit / male with conical headdress, standing, facing left, **R in Palm Out** with scorpion below, L to the side; before him is another standing male facing left; before both male figures is male or female with tall headdress, seated on throne, facing left, in Palms Out / Amiet, *SC*, 53, 58 (no. 94).
- Louvre AO 13167 LB Ugarit / male with no headdress, standing or striding, facing left, **R in Palm Out**, L to the side; before him are moon crescent, sun disk, bird, plants, and cross / Amiet, *SC*, 113, 116 (no. 257).
- Louvre AO 14814 MB Ugarit / male with no headdress, kneeling, facing right, **L in Palm Out**, R across torso; facing him is lion, behind which is standing female figure, facing left, R in Palm In / Amiet, *SC*, 26, 29 (no. 29).
- Louvre AO 17246 LB Ugarit / procession of three males with no headdresses, standing or striding, facing right; third figure has **L in Palm Out**, R to the side; before (or perhaps behind) these three figures is single stalk of grain / Amiet, *SC*, 113, 117 (no. 260).

²⁵¹ In Collon, "Green Jasper," pl. 22, this seal is labeled incorrectly as number 12.

- Louvre AO 19420 LB Ugarit / two right-facing figures approaching a left-facing figure seated on a throne; foremost approaching figure is male with short pointed headdress, standing, **L in Palm Out**, R to the side; second approaching figure is male with no headdress, standing, **L in Palm Out** (hand raised slightly higher than that of the foremost figure), R to the side / Amiet, *SC*, 89, 100 (no. 192).
- Louvre AO 22361 P, LB Sidon / male with no headdress, standing, facing right, **L in Palm Out**, R to the side; behind him is male with White Crown, standing, facing right, R in Fist Up with mace, L forward with shield; facing them is male with Seth-animal-like head, standing, R forward and grasping *was* scepter, L to the side / Frankfort, *CS*, pl. 44p; Gubel, "Iconography of Inscribed Phoenician Glyptic," 105, 127 (fig. 9);²⁵² Cornelius, *ICGRB*, 92, pl. 27 (no. RM2).
- NBC 7530 Syria / procession of two practically identical males with prominent hairdo or short cap, standing or striding, facing right, **L in Palm Out**, R not visible; before them is male with short headdress, standing, facing right, surrounded by jagged arch, hands in front of abdomen / Buchanan, *YBC*, 412-13 (no. 1186).
- NBC 7680 MB Syria / two standing figures in Palm Out, facing right, before seated figure facing left; standing figure closest to the seated figure is female with no headdress, **L in Palm Out** with *ankh* sign below and star above, R on abdomen; behind her is male with no headdress, **L in Palm Out** with *ankh* sign below and sun disk in crescent above, R tucked into robe / Buchanan, *YBC*, 418-19 (no. 1203).
- NBC 7818 Syria / procession of two right-facing figures toward dividing line (perhaps tree or curtain²⁵³) behind which is left-facing winged and bird-headed figure; leftmost approaching figure is male with no headdress, standing or striding, **L in Palm Out** with fish below, R to the side / Buchanan, *YBC*, 412-13 (no. 1184).
- NBC 10952 Syria / three right-facing figures approaching two confronted quadrupeds with serpent-like necks, the animals being connected by lines to central pole; first approaching figure from right is of uncertain identification (possibly human male or monkey), kneeling, **L in Palm Out**, R not visible; second approaching figure is human male with short cap or hairdo, standing, **L in Palm Out**, R not visible; third approaching figure is like second, but whether his gesture is Palm Out is not certain; scorpion above head of first approaching figure and before outturned palm of second approaching figure; three sun disks at top of field, interspersed between figures / Buchanan, *YBC*, 408-9 (no. 1172).

²⁵² Gubel, p. 27, gives the museum number as Louvre AO 22362, which is incorrect.

²⁵³ Buchanan, *YBC*, 413, identifies this as a "tree with twisted trunk, narrow pine near top."

- NBC 10955 Syria / male with no headdress, standing, facing right, **L in Palm Out** with arm crossing in front of spear that is apparently planted point-down in the ground, R to the side; facing him is female figure with no headdress, standing, R forward and grasping spear with point downward, L to the side; behind her is male or female figure with no headdress, standing, facing left, R lowered with double-headed mace, L raised with sickle sword or throwing stick / Buchanan, *YBC*, 416-17 (no. 1194).
- NBC 11089 MB Syria / male with short conical headdress, standing, facing right, **L in Palm Out**, R to the side; facing him is bearded male with no discernible headdress, seated on throne, R holding cup (shape of hand resembles Palm In); winged sun disk between these two figures, above first figure's raised hand / Buchanan, *YBC*, 420-21 (no. 1211).
- NCBS 707 MB Syria-Palestine / male figure with no headdress, standing, facing right, **L in Palm Out** with *ankh* sign below, R on or across chest; before him is falcon-headed male figure with Double Crown, standing, facing left, R forward and grasping *was* scepter, L to the side / Buchanan, *YBC*, 430-31 (no. 1258).
- Newell 315 Syria / two right-facing standing figures before left-facing rampant griffin; figure immediately before griffin is male with no headdress, **R in Palm Out**, L forward and grasping hare by the tail; figure behind him is male with no headdress, R to the side and grasping sickle sword, L holding indistinct object at waist / Buchanan, *YBC*, 414-15 (no. 1192).
- Newell 317 MB Syria / falcon-headed male with no headdress, standing, facing right, **L in Palm Out** with handled jug and *ankh* sign below, R to the side; before him is altar flanked by confronted figures who raise their hands toward each other as if in Palm Out, but seemingly with fists instead of open palms / Buchanan, *YBC*, 424-25 (no. 1230).
- Newell 318 MB Syria-Palestine / first scene: falcon-headed male with tall crown, standing, facing right, **L in Palm Out**, R to the side; facing him, and in line with his gesture, is falcon with Double Crown atop plant motif; second scene: female with no headdress, standing, facing left, **L in Palm Out**, R forward and holding tall vessel (shape of hand resembles Palm In); facing her is male with no headdress, standing, L very slightly lifted with palm downward, R to the side; between them are two birds, one atop the other, facing left / Buchanan, *YBC*, 430-31 (no. 1259).

- Newell 319 MB Syria / female with sun disk in crescent on her head, standing, facing right, **L in Palm Out** with bird above and *djed*-hieroglyph below, R down and to the side; in front of her is male figure with short rounded headdress, seated on throne, facing right, R in Palm In, L close to body, cartouche above knees; approaching to the right is male or female figure with uraeus headdress, standing or striding, facing left, **R in Palm Out with hand lowered so that palm is nearly parallel to ground** and with *ankh*-hieroglyph below, L down and to the side; sun disk in crescent above and between the enthroned figure and the one approaching on the right / Buchanan, *YBC*, 418-19 (no. 1204).
- Newell 320 MB Syria / female with no headdress, standing, facing right, **L in Palm Out** (hand raised relatively high), R holding staff or scepter; in front of her is male figure with Double Crown, standing, facing right, **L in Palm Out** (hand raised slightly lower than that of the female behind him), R down and to the side; facing him is winged male with indistinct short headdress, standing or striding, **R in Palm Out** with bird below, L down and to the side; behind winged figure is a male with no headdress, standing or striding, facing left, **R in Palm Out** with *djed* sign below, L down and to the side / Buchanan, *YBC*, 428-29 (no. 1243).
- Newell 322 MB Syria / lion-headed male figure with no headdress, standing, facing right, **L in Palm Out** with *djed* sign below, R behind and holding dagger; before him are two other figures, standing and facing left: winged male or female with headdress, R forward and grasping spear with point downward; female with no discernible headdress, forearms not clearly shown / Buchanan, *YBC*, 428-29 (no. 1245).
- Newell 325 MB Syria / male figure with no headdress, standing or striding, facing right, **R in Palm Out**, L forward and holding small indistinct animal; before him is winged male figure with horned headdress, standing, facing left, R holding spear with point downward, L to the side / Buchanan, *YBC*, 428-29 (no. 1246).
- Newell 338 MB Syria / female with no headdress, standing, facing right, **L in Palm Out**, R to the side; facing her is another female with no headdress, standing, **R in Palm Out**, L to the side; uncertain object above confronted figures²⁵⁴ gesturing hands;²⁵⁴ another male or female figure to the far right stands, facing left, R forward and holding short sword²⁵⁵ with point upward, L to the side / Buchanan, *YBC*, 424-25 (no. 1227).

²⁵⁴ Buchanan, *YBC*, 425, identifies the object as a “doubly ringed cup.”

²⁵⁵ Buchanan, *YBC*, 425, identifies this as a “palm branch,” but there are no fronds.

- PBN 485 Unknown provenance / female with no headdress, standing, facing right, **L in Palm Out**, R to the side and grasping *ankh* sign; before her is male with short and flat headdress, seated, facing right, L forward and holding cup, R held close to body; facing them is male with no headdress, standing, R forward and holding lotus flower, L to the side / Collon, "Green Jasper," 59, 67 (no. 13); Keel, "Jaspis-Skarabäen-Gruppe," 215 (no. 13).
- PML NN (2) MB, Uncertain provenance / female with pair of horns but no other visible headdress, standing, facing right, **L in Palm Out** with scorpion below, R to the side; facing her is male with no headdress, seated on throne, R holding cup (shape of hand resembles Palm In), L tucked into robe / *ANEP*, 69, 274 (no. 223).
- UCL 11616 Unknown provenance / male with White Crown, standing, facing right, **L in Palm Out** with *ankh* sign and water sign above, *ankh* sign in front, and inscribed cartouche below, R to the side; facing him is male with short and rounded headdress (or no headdress), standing, R tucked into robe, L to the side; behind this second figure is male with short and rounded headdress (or no headdress), standing, facing left, **L in Palm Out** with Hem sign below, R forward and grasping tall lotus plant with bird perched upon it / Collon, "Green Jasper," 58, 64, pl. 22 (no. 1); Keel, "Jaspis-Skarabäen-Gruppe," 212 (no. 1).
- YBC 9695 MB Syria / female with no headdress, standing, facing right, **L in Palm Out**, R to the side; before her is shorter male or female, standing, facing right; facing them is female with no headdress, standing, facing left, in Palm In; sun disk in crescent at face level between the two taller figures / Buchanan, *YBC*, 422-23 (no. 1220).
- PLU (61) LB Ugarit (RS 4.005) / female with no headdress, standing, facing right, **L in Palm Out** with globule (perhaps sun disk) below, R to the side; facing her is male with no headdress, standing, R in front of abdomen, L not visible; between the two figures is short altar with smoke / Amiet, *SC*, 94, 105 (no. 226).
- PLU (62) LB Ugarit (RS 5.030) / female figure with no headdress, standing, facing right, **L in Palm Out**, R to the side and grasping uncertain object (branch?); facing her, across an altar, is male figure with no discernible headdress, standing, in uncertain gesture / Amiet, *SC*, 93-94, 105 (no. 224).
- PLU (63) LB Ugarit (RS 5.137) / male or female with no discernible headdress, seated, facing left, **R in Palm Out**, L held close to chest; before him/her is offering table atop which is conical object; on other side of table is male or female with no discernible headdress, standing, facing right, R in uncertain gesture, L to the side; between the two facing figures and above offering table is cross inside circle / Amiet, *SC*, 96-97, 109 (no. 248).

- PLU (64) LB Ugarit (RS 10.003) / procession of two males with heads mostly obscured (possibly they have animal heads), standing or striding, facing left; first figure has **R in Palm Out** across stalk or trunk with no head or obscured head, L upraised as in Fist Up (hand obscured) or to the side with hand on chest;²⁵⁶ second figure has **R in Palm Out** with forearm slightly more vertical than first figure, L to the side / Amiet, *SC*, 115, 119 (no. 277).
- PLU (65) MB Ugarit (RS 11.025) / female with horned headdress, standing, facing right, **L in Palm Out**, R tucked into robe; behind her is male or female with head missing, standing, facing right, L in uncertain gesture (most likely Palm Out), L tucked into robe; facing them is male with tall and round-topped headdress, standing, L in Palm In, R forward and grasping spear with point downward; between first figure and facing figure, and in line with their gestures, is eight-petaled rosette / Amiet, *SC*, 27-28, 31 (no. 40).
- PLU (66) P, probably LB Ugarit (RS 11.[286]) / male or female with tall headdress, seated, facing left, **R in Palm Out**, L not clearly visible; behind or before him are two male or female figures with no discernible headdresses, standing, facing left, R forward and holding staff, L to the side / Amiet, *SC*, 53, 58 (no. 93).
- PLU (67) MB Ugarit (RS 30.253) / male with no headdress, standing, facing right, **L in Palm Out**, R to the side; facing him is male with no headdress, standing, **R in Palm Out**, L to the side; between them is altar, above which are star and sun disk; behind second figure is virtually identical figure (male with no headdress, **R in Palm Out**, L to the side) / Amiet, *SC*, 26-27, 30 (no. 33).
- PLU (68) LB Emar / two right-facing figures approaching left-facing figure; second right-facing figure is male with headdress or hairdo resembling serpent, standing, **L in Palm Out**, R to the side / Beyer, *Sceaux*, 255 (no. F4).
- PLU (69) LB Emar / male or female with rounded and brimmed headdress, standing, facing left, **R in Palm Out** with globules forming rosette above, L partially obscured but seemingly tucked into robe; facing him/her is standing female with horned headdress / Beyer, *Sceaux*, 258 (no. F10).
- PLU (70) LB Emar / four indistinct standing figures on boat, of which second figure from left is male with no discernible headdress, facing left, **R in Palm Out**, L not visible / Beyer, *Sceaux*, 267 (no. F25).
- PLU (71) Hazor / male with tall headdress, standing, facing left, **L in Palm Out**, R forward and grasping scepter or weapon; before him is male or female with tall headdress, seated on throne, facing right, L forward in uncertain hand gesture, R tucked into robe; winged sun disk above these two figures / Yadin, *Hazor III-IV*, pl. 319.2.

²⁵⁶ It is difficult to interpret the lines here. It could be that the seal cutter has actually carved both positions for the left arm, either on purpose or by mistake.

- PLU (72) LB Emar / procession of two left-facing figures in Palm Out toward a right-facing figure in Fist Up: first figure is male or female with horned headdress and long robe, standing, **R in Palm Out**, L tucked into robe; second figure is male with no discernible headdress, standing, **R in Palm Out** with *ankh* sign below, L apparently tucked into robe / Beyer, *Sceaux*, 260 (no. F13).
- PLU (73) LB Emar / male with no discernible headdress (possibly skull cap), standing, facing right, **R in Palm Out** with *ankh* sign below, L tucked into robe; before him is male in Fist Up, facing left / Beyer, *Sceaux*, 261 (no. F15).
- PLU (74) Unknown provenance / male with no headdress, standing, facing right, **L in Palm Out** with *ankh* sign in front and inscribed cartouche below; facing him is male with robe but no discernible headdress, standing, R forward and grasping axe, L to the side; vulture with spread wings above and between the two figures / Collon, "Green Jasper," 58, 64 (no. 2); Keel, "Jaspis-Skarabäen-Gruppe," 212 (no. 2).
- PLU (75) Tell Beit Mirsim / male with no discernible headdress, standing, facing left, **R in Palm Out**, L to the side; facing him is male with no headdress, standing, L forward and making fist, R to the side; field between and behind these figures is crowded with various animals, cuneiform signs, and hieroglyphs / Collon, "Green Jasper," 58, 64 (no. 3); Keel, "Jaspis-Skarabäen-Gruppe," 212 (no. 3).
- PLU (76) P, Unknown provenance / female with horned sun disk headdress, standing, facing left, **L in Palm Out**, R forward and grasping staff; facing her is male with short and pointed headdress, standing, L in Palm In, R tucked into robe / Collon, "Green Jasper," 59, 67, pl. 22 (no. 12);²⁵⁷ Keel, "Jaspis-Skarabäen-Gruppe," 215 (no. 12).
- PLU (77) Iron I Kition, Cyprus / male with short and rounded headdress (or no headdress), standing, facing left, **R in Palm Out** with *ankh* sign above, L to the side; facing him is male with short and rounded headdress (or no headdress), standing, L tucked into robe, R to the side and holding weapon / Collon, "Green Jasper," 59, 65 (no. 6); Keel, "Jaspis-Skarabäen-Gruppe," 213 (no. 6).
- PLU (78) MB Poros, Crete / male with Red Crown, standing, facing right, **L in Palm Out**, R to the side; facing him is male with short and rounded headdress (or no headdress), standing, R tucked into robe, L to the side; behind second figure is male with White Crown, standing, facing left, **L in Palm Out** with *ankh* sign below, R forward and grasping staff / Collon, "Green Jasper," 58, 65 (no. 5); Keel, "Jaspis-Skarabäen-Gruppe," 213 (no. 5).

More than any other type of object with the exception of metal bowls, cylinder seals show gesturing figures within complex scenes; thus they offer the opportunity for a more

²⁵⁷ In Collon, "Green Jasper," pl. 22, this seal is labeled incorrectly as number 11.

complete analysis of contextual features of gestures, especially settings, targets, and agents. The evidence for targets of the Palm Out gesture is particularly abundant. As with the Fist Up gesture, care must be exercised in identifying possible targets among multiple human figures, animals, and/or objects that may be represented in a scene. Four criteria are useful in deciding whether a given figure is a target of the Palm Out gesture: (1) the directionality of the potential target (if the figure is facing the agent, then he/she/it is more likely to be a target); (2) the proximity of the potential target (the closer to the agent, the more likely the role as target); (3) the size, height, and position of the potential target (a figure is most readily identified as target when it is large, in line with the gesture, and central to the composition); and (4) the nature of the potential target (whether or not there are other and more certain examples of a given figure as target of the gesture). There are, as may be expected, cases in which these criteria are difficult to apply because of the complexity of a scene. For example, some seals show two confronted figures plus a third figure who faces the confronted pair and performs the Palm Out gesture.²⁵⁸ In these cases, is the target of the third figure's gesture the one immediately in front of the agent (fulfilling the criterion of proximity but not directionality), the one facing the agent (fulfilling the criterion of directionality but not proximity), or both? In the following categorization of targets, we exclude these and other ambiguous cases, focusing on those in which the identification of the target is reasonably straightforward based on the four criteria.

Among examples in which there is a clearly identifiable target, there are ten basic types of scenarios: (1) a standing figure performs the Palm Out gesture toward a facing enthroned figure, who sometimes holds a cup; (2) an enthroned figure performs the gesture toward one or more attendants, who stand and face the enthroned figure; (3) an enthroned figure performs the

²⁵⁸ Ashmolean 1920.52, Ashmolean 1952.129 (agent on left), BM 131487, Damascus 3016, NBC 7818.

gesture toward an offering table loaded with offerings;²⁵⁹ (4) a standing figure performs the gesture toward the back of an enthroned figure;²⁶⁰ (5) a standing figure performs the gesture toward a standing deity, who may be a smiting storm god, a winged god, a goddess with horns (dubbed the “Syrian goddess” by Collon²⁶¹), a nude goddess in frontal view, a falcon-headed god with a double crown and *was* scepter, or a Seth-animal-headed god²⁶² with a *was* scepter; (6) a standing figure performs the gesture toward a divine symbol or group of symbols; (7) a standing figure performs the gesture toward an animal, which may be a winged sphinx, a rampant griffin, a lion, or a group of quadrupeds (one example of each type of animal is extant); (8) a standing figure performs the gesture toward a large tree motif; (9) two standing figures, both in the Palm Out gesture, face each other;²⁶³ (10) other miscellaneous scenes in which the gesture is performed by a human or standing deity toward a confronted standing human. The examples of each type of scenario are shown in table 22.

²⁵⁹ In these scenes, one or more attendants may also be shown on the other side of the offering table. While the human attendant(s) could conceivably be interpreted as the target in these examples, two considerations make it seem more likely that the target is the offering table and the offerings upon it. First, in these scenes, the table with its offerings is shown as being uncommonly large, is central to the composition, and intercepts the line between the gesturing hand and the attendants. This fulfills the third criterion for the identification of the target as described in the preceding paragraph. (By contrast, Damascus 2924 shows a small altar or offering table between the seated figure and a group of attendants, but the target in this case must be the attendants and not the altar itself, since the altar is small, does not bear an offering, and is not in line with the gesture.) Second, Damascus 3000 shows only the table of offerings with no human attendants. The target must be the table of offerings in at least this one case, which suggests that the same is true for the other examples. The notion that the offering table functions as target of the Palm Out gesture is not particularly problematic; the purpose of the gesture could, for instance, be to accept the offerings or sanctify them prior to their being redistributed to the deity’s human subjects.

²⁶⁰ This goes against the criterion of directionality, but it fulfills the criterion of proximity, and the enthroned figure is also typically central to the composition and large.

²⁶¹ Collon, *SITA*, 180-81.

²⁶² This animal, commonly seen in Egyptian iconography and associated with the god Seth, is of uncertain identification. See Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar*, 460, E20-21; Wilkinson, *Reading Egyptian Art*, 66-67.

²⁶³ A tree may be shown between the figures, as in Damascus 2532, but this category is nevertheless distinguishable from category number 8 on the basis of the criteria described above. In the case of Damascus 2532, the tree is so thin that it does not really interrupt the relationship between the two flanking figures, and its foliage overshadows the gestures of the two figures instead of being in line with them.

Table 22. Targets of the Palm Out Gesture on Cylinder Seals

Type	Target	Examples
1	confronted enthroned figure	Antakya 10302, Louvre AO 19420, NBC 7680, NBC 11089, Newell 319, PML NN (2), PLU (71)
2	confronted standing attendant(s)	Antakya 10302, Damascus 2924
3	offering table loaded with offerings	Ashmolean 1913.336, Damascus 2841, Damascus 3000, PLU (63)
4	back of enthroned figure	Amman NN, Newell 319, PBN 485
5	(5a) smiting god	Antakya 8009, BM 130652, PLU (72), PLU (73)
	(5b) winged god	Antakya 7876 (1), Newell 320, Newell 322, Newell 325
	(5c) Syrian goddess	Antakya 3206 (1), Antakya 7318 (4), Antakya 7900 (3), PLU (69)
	(5d) nude goddess	Aleppo 4765, Ashmolean 1920.24
	(5e) falcon-headed god	NCBS 707
	(5f) Seth-animal- headed god	Louvre AO 22361
6	divine symbol(s)	Louvre AO 13167, Newell 318
7	(7a) winged sphinx	Damascus 2598
	(7b) rampant griffin	Newell 315
	(7c) lion	Louvre AO 14814
	(7d) group of quadrupeds	Damascus 2668
8	tree	Antakya 7318 (3), Damascus 2898
9	confronted standing figure, also in Palm Out	Aleppo M. 996, Damascus 2532, Newell 338, PLU (67)
10	confronted standing human, not in Palm Out	Aleppo M. 4528, Antakya 9103, Ashmolean 1952.129, Damascus 2896, De Clercq 389, NBC 10955, Newell 317, Newell 318, UCL 11616, YBC 9695, PLU (RS 26.[501]), PLU (61), PLU (62), PLU (65), PLU (68), PLU (74), PLU (75)-(78)

In addition to the examples given in the table, the target in Damascus 3016 is either the smiting god, the Syrian goddess, or both. However, Damascus 3016 belongs to the ambiguous three-figure type discussed in the preceding paragraph.

Cylinder seals display the whole range of possibilities found in the overall corpus for the agent of the Palm Out gesture. The agent may be seated, standing, or kneeling; human or divine; male or female. Some recurring types may be discerned; these are outlined in the list below.

seated deity: Antakya 10302, Ashmolean 1913.336, Damascus 2841, Damascus 2924, Damascus 3000, PLU (66)
standing god with falcon head and Egyptian crown: Aleppo 4765, Aleppo M. 996, BM 131487, De Clercq 389, Newell 318
standing god with human head and Egyptian crown: Ashmolean 1952.129, Newell 320, UCL 11616
standing winged god with horned headdress: Aleppo M. 4528, Antakya 8009, Newell 320
standing goddess: Ashmolean 1920.52, Newell 319, Newell 320, PBN 485, PML NN (2), PLU (65), PLU (76)
standing male with rounded headdress and wrapped robe, non-gesturing hand tucked into robe: Aleppo M. 996, Antakya 3206 (1), Antakya 7876 (1), Antakya 7900 (2), Antakya 7900 (3), Ashmolean 1952.129, Damascus 3016, Louvre A 906, NBC 7680, PLU (72), PLU (73)
man in kneeling position: Antakya 7992, Ashmolean 1921.1188, Louvre AO 14814, NBC 10952

Most of these recurring types are also found in other media; for example, the standing male with rounded headdress and wrapped robe, who performs the Palm Out gesture with one hand and has the other tucked into his robe, is also found on two stelae from Ugarit. This figure on cylinder seals has generally been identified as a Syrian ruler, which accords with how he is usually identified on the Ugaritic stelae.²⁶⁴

²⁶⁴ Collon, *SITA*, 186-88, pl. 31; Silvia Schroer, "Der Mann im Wulstsaummantel: Ein Motiv der Mittelbronze-Zeit II B," in Othmar Keel and Silvia Schroer, *Studien zu den Stempelsiegeln aus Palästina/Israel, Band I* (Fribourg: University Press, 1985), 49-115; Aharon Kempinski, "The Middle Bronze Age," in *The Archaeology of Ancient Israel*, ed. Amnon Ben-Tor (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 199-200.

The setting of the Palm Out gesture as shown on cylinder seals appears, for the most part, to be sacred space (such as a temple or shrine). This is indicated by the presence of an altar or offering table between the agent and the target in a few types of scenes. There are seven examples with altars or offering tables: Ashmolean 1913.336, Damascus 2841, Damascus 2924, Damascus 3000, PLU (61), PLU (62), and PLU (63). The presence of an enthroned deity, whether as the agent or the target of the gesture, is also an indicator of a sacred setting (either the heavenly court or a temple cella). Animals and vegetal motifs could imply an outdoor setting in some cases, although these can often be understood as symbols of deity or as guardians of sacred space (particularly griffins and sphinxes).

In examples of the Palm Out gesture as shown on cylinder seals, there is often a symbol directly underneath or above the gesturing hand. It is possible that these symbols were, in many cases, simply space-fillers. However, the frequent occurrence of certain symbols specifically in connection with Palm Out (and also Palm In, for which see below) suggests that they may have served as a sort of abbreviated inscription, communicating an aspect of the ritual in which the gesture was used. The most frequent symbol in this context is the *ankh* sign (the Egyptian hieroglyph for “life,” which has the form of a *crux ansata*); it occurs nineteen times in connection with the Palm Out gesture on cylinder seals. Other symbols include a sign resembling the Egyptian *djed* sign (the hieroglyph for “stability”²⁶⁵), a fish, a scorpion, and a sun disk. The examples of each symbol are given in the following list.

²⁶⁵ This object has been identified differently in various instances. Buchanan identifies it as a “standard” in Newell 320 and 322; see Buchanan, *YBC*, 429 (nos. 1243, 1245). However, the object is close enough to the one in Newell 319, which he identifies as an “Egyptian hieroglyph” (presumably referring to the *djed* sign) that a single identification could be given to both; see Buchanan, *YBC*, 418 (no. 1204). Another possible interpretation of the object could be a mace, since it resembles an object that is brandished as a weapon in NBC 10955. Ultimately, the frequency of Egyptian symbols in these cylinder seals, especially the *ankh* sign, argues for the identification of the object in Newell 319, 320, and 322 as a *djed* sign (which often occurs together with the *ankh* in Egyptian contexts).

ankh: Aleppo M. 996, Ashmolean 1921.1188 (twice), BM 131487, Damascus 2725, Damascus 3016, Louvre A 906 (twice), NBC 7680 (twice), NCBS 707, Newell 317, Newell 319, UCL 11616, PLU (72), PLU (73), PLU (74), PLU (77), PLU (78)

djed: Newell 319, Newell 320, Newell 322

fish: Aleppo M. 4528, Ashmolean 1913.336, NBC 7818

scorpion: Louvre AO 13163, PML NN (2), Aleppo 4765

sun disk: PLU (RS 26.[501]), Damascus 2896, PLU (61)

The occurrence of these symbols near the gesturing hand is a phenomenon restricted to glyptic art.²⁶⁶ The meaning of these symbols will be discussed further in section 4.3.7.2 below.

Scarabs also provide important evidence for the use of the Palm Out gesture in Northwest Semitic glyptic art. Various styles of scarab seals, including Egyptian types from the Late Bronze Age, depict figures in the Palm Out gesture. However, in order to avoid incorporating styles that are not properly Northwest Semitic, we focus here on scarabs belonging to the “Hyksos” style and various other local styles that differ from typical Egyptian style.

As with the ivories and cylinder seals that have been discussed above, the scarabs in our corpus show figures making the Palm Out gesture while in seated, standing, and kneeling postures. There is only one example of the seated type, a Middle Bronze Age Hyksos scarab from Tell el-Far‘ah South (LIA EV.62/1), shown in figure 17.²⁶⁷

²⁶⁶ The sole possible exception of which we are aware is the ivory BM 132917, which seems to show the top of an *ankh* sign underneath the elbow of the hand that is in Palm Out. This is very uncertain, however, given the fragmentary nature of the piece.

²⁶⁷ Keel, *Corpus* III, 110-11 (no. 192). The material of this scarab is steatite, which was traditionally regarded as an indicator of manufacture in Egypt. However, Keel argues that there were indeed local Palestinian workshops that produced scarabs in steatite; see Othmar Keel, “Stempelsiegel: Das Problem palästinischer Werkstätten,” in *Studien zu den Stempelsiegeln aus Palästina/Israel, Band IV* (Fribourg: University Press, 1994), 209-13. In any event, the style of this piece is definitely of the Asiatic “Hyksos” type and not native Egyptian.

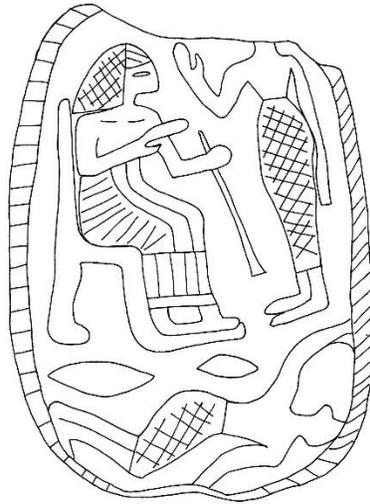


Figure 17. Hyksos scarab showing seated figure in Palm Out.
Drawn by the author after Keel, *Corpus III*, 111.

This scarab shows a female with no headdress, seated on a throne, her right hand in Palm Out with the hand lowered so that it is almost parallel with the ground, and her left hand forward and grasping a staff or scepter. Facing her is another female, standing, making the Palm In gesture with her raised right hand. Beneath them is a prostrate human figure.

Figure 18 shows an example of a Hyksos scarab with a standing figure, this one from Tell el-‘Ajjūl (BM L. 971).²⁶⁸

²⁶⁸ Giveon, *ESWA*, 84-85 (no. 71).



Figure 18. Hyksos scarab showing standing figure in Palm Out.
 Drawn by the author after Giveon, *ESWA*, 85.

In this piece, a male with a tall headdress stands and faces left, his right hand in Palm Out. His left hand is missing but probably would have hung to the side. Before him, on a perpendicular plane, is a lion jumping on the back of an ibex.

The remaining “Hyksos” and local scarabs showing this gesture are listed below.

- | | |
|------------------|--|
| Amman 10087 | MB Dothan / falcon-headed male with no discernible headdress, standing, facing right, L in Palm Out , R to the side and grasping curved object (perhaps throwing stick); before him is sun disk above scarab beetle; symmetrical standing male figure opposite / Keel, <i>Corpus II</i> , 502-3 (no. 27). |
| Haifa IAA 86-152 | MB Akko / male with no discernible headdress, standing, facing right, L in Palm Out with <i>ankh</i> sign above and unidentified object and falcon below, R to the side / Keel, <i>Corpus I</i> , 624-25 (no. 265). |
| IAA 96-1956 | MB Atlit / falcon-headed male with no discernible headdress, standing, facing right, L in Palm Out with uraeus below and sun disk above, R to the side; below him is Neb sign / Keel, <i>Corpus I</i> , 776-77 (no. 48). |
| IAA 96-1958 | MB Atlit / falcon-headed male with Red Crown, standing, facing left, R in Palm Out with Nefer sign and uraeus above, L to the side; before him, on perpendicular plane, is crocodile; large uraeus opposite / Keel, <i>Corpus I</i> , 776-77 (no. 49). |

- LIA EV.26/6 MB Tell el-Far‘ah South / female with no headdress, kneeling, facing right (but with head turned backward), **L in Palm Out**, R mostly hidden; facing her is another kneeling female holding large lotus bud / Keel, *Corpus III*, 34-35 (no. 16).
- Rockefeller 38.540 MB Tell el-Ajjul / female with no discernible headdress, standing, facing right, **L in Palm Out** with bread loaf and large uraeus underneath, R to the side / Tufnell, *Studies on Scarab Seals*, 2/2:344-45 (no. 2744).
- Rockefeller 47.578 MB Tell el-Ajjul / two standing figures facing right towards uraeus; second right-facing figure is falcon-headed male, **L in Palm Out**, R to the side / Tufnell, *Studies on Scarab Seals*, 2/2:348-49 (no. 2778); Keel, *Corpus I*, 464-65 (no. 1056).
- Rockefeller I. 4376 MB Tell el-Far‘ah South / female with no discernible headdress, standing, facing right, **L in Palm Out** with large uraeus underneath, R to the side / Tufnell, *Studies on Scarab Seals*, 2/2:344-45 (no. 2736); Keel, *Corpus III*, 54-55 (no. 62).
- Rockefeller I. 7078 LB-Iron I Tell el-Far‘ah South / male with head missing, standing, facing right, **L in Palm Out**, R to the side; before him, on perpendicular plane, is crocodile²⁶⁹ / Keel, *Corpus III*, 242-43 (no. 503).
- Rockefeller I. 10223 MB Tell el-Ajjul / male with no discernible headdress, standing, facing right, **L in Palm Out** with large uraeus immediately before, R to the side; before him, under uraeus, is scarab beetle; symmetrical standing male figure with uraeus opposite / Tufnell, *Studies on Scarab Seals*, 2/2:348-49 (no. 2794; also = no. 2568); Keel, *Corpus I*, 138-39 (no. 102).
- PLU (79) MB Ashkelon (Ashkelon 32431) / male with no discernible headdress (unless object behind head is interpreted as feathered or floral headdress), standing, facing left, **R in Palm Out** with drooping lotus bud above and floral motif or Sen sign below (separated by extended hand of facing figure); facing him is slightly smaller male with no discernible headdress, standing, L forward with lotus plant, R to the side / Keel, *Corpus I*, 730-31 (no. 113).
- PLU (80) MB Tell el-Ajjul / female with no discernible headdress, standing, facing right, **L in Palm Out**, R to the side; before her is tree / Tufnell, *Studies on Scarab Seals*, 2/2:344-45 (no. 2745); Keel, *Corpus I*, 460-61 (no. 1044).

The targets of the Palm Out gesture attested in these scarabs are comparable to those attested on stelae, ivories, and cylinder seals. In particular, the seated figure performing the Palm Out gesture toward a standing attendant, as shown on the scarab LIA EV.62/1, is a motif of

²⁶⁹ As Keel notes (*Corpus III*, 242), this seal belongs to a certain scarab type of the Late Bronze Age that is characterized by composite materials (like this piece) and the use of simplified Ramesside motifs. However, Keel also notes that the motif here is definitely not Ramesside; there are several parallels, but they are all from the Middle Bronze Age. What we have here, then, is probably a local Late Bronze Age use of a Middle Bronze Age motif.

which there are clear examples on stelae and cylinder seals (compare the seated 'Ilu stela, the Yahawwimilk stela, and the second type in table 22); the motif may also be found among carved ivories, if the individual ivories were coordinated as suggested above. Other motifs that include a target and that recur on the various types of objects in our corpus are the standing figures who flank and perform the Palm Out gesture toward a scarab beetle (Amman 10087, Rockefeller I. 10223; compare the Nimrud ivories, also the metal bowls discussed below) and the standing figure performing the gesture toward a tree (PLU [80]; compare type 8 in table 22 for cylinder seals).²⁷⁰ Scarabs also show some targets of the gesture that are unknown or unrecognizable elsewhere; these include a crocodile (IAA 96-1958, Rockefeller I. 7078) and a lion jumping on the back of an ibex (BM L. 971).

There is considerable overlap between the agents of the Palm Out gesture shown on scarabs and those shown on cylinder seals. One example of the seated deity occurs on a scarab (LIA EV.62/1), and the standing male falcon-headed figure occurs on four scarabs (Amman 10087, IAA 96-1956, IAA 96-1958, Rockefeller 47.578). For the latter, unlike on cylinder seals, the falcon-headed figure is usually without a crown, perhaps due in part to the lack of space on the seal; only IAA 96-1958 shows the falcon-headed figure wearing a crown (the Red Crown of Lower Egypt).

In several examples of Palm Out on scarabs, there is a symbol above or underneath the gesturing hand. Some of these symbols are the same as those associated with the Palm Out gesture on cylinder seals: an *ankh* (Haifa IAA 86-152) and a sun disk (IAA 96-1956). The most

²⁷⁰ In these three examples of scarabs, the Palm Out gesture appears to be directed above the scarab beetle or tree that functions as the target. However, this is explainable as a result of having to condense the scene into a small ovoid space. Were there enough space, as is the case with ivories and cylinder seals, we would expect the scarab beetle or tree to be larger and in line with the Palm Out gesture. In the two examples in which the target is a scarab beetle, the beetle is surmounted by a sun disk (Amman 10087) or a pair of confronted uraei (Rockefeller I. 10223). These are roughly equivalent symbols, both being associated with the sun: see Wilkinson, *Reading Egyptian Art*, 108-9.

common symbol associated with the gesture on scarabs, however, is the uraeus, which emanates from underneath the gesturing hand and faces in the same direction (IAA 96-1956, IAA 96-1958, Rockefeller 38.540, Rockefeller I. 4376). The occurrence of this symbol on scarabs provides a parallel between the Palm Out gesture and the Fist Up gesture, and it may indicate that Palm Out could sometimes have a supernatural and hostile function like that of Fist Up. The uraeus in these examples may also have some significance that is yet mysterious to us, perhaps being symbolically connected, as in Egypt, with the sun.²⁷¹

For Iron Age glyptic art, the Palm Out gesture is attested in stamp seals and bullae, many of which bear a short inscription that identifies the seal owner. The greater part of these seals and bullae are unprovenanced, having been obtained through the antiquities market. However, a fair number come from excavations at Akhzib, Akko, Arban, 'Atlit, Beth-guvrin, Beth-shean, Tell el-Far'ah South, and Samaria.

Again, as with the roughly contemporary Nimrud ivories, as also with earlier types of glyptic art (cylinder and scarab seals), figures shown in Palm Out on Iron Age stamp seals and bullae may be seated, standing, or kneeling. Two of these types, the seated and the standing figure, are attested on an unprovenanced stamp seal (reportedly from near Ṭarṭus) that belongs to the de Clercq collection in Paris (PBN de Clercq 2504); the scene is shown in figure 19. This seal, though without a definite archaeological context, may be considered Phoenician on the basis of its style and the letter-forms of the inscription it bears.²⁷²

²⁷¹ Wilkinson, *Reading Egyptian Art*, 108-9. On IAA 96-1956, the uraeus wears the crown of Lower Egypt and is collocated with a sun disk.

²⁷² Avigad, *Corpus*, 273 (no. 735).



Figure 19. Stamp seal showing seated deity in Palm Out.
 Drawn by the author after Avigad, *Corpus*, 273.

In this scene, a falcon-headed female²⁷³ with a sun disk on her head is seated on a throne, her left hand in Palm Out, her right hand forward and holding an uncertain object, possibly an incense burner.²⁷⁴ Behind her is a mummiform male with a sun disk on his head. Facing the seated figure is an ibis-headed male, also with a sun disk on his head, who stands and performs the Palm Out gesture toward the seated figure with his left hand. A winged sun disk hovers over all three figures, and a Neb sign forms the exergue and ground line for the scene. An inscription in Phoenician script in the field gives the seal owner's name, *grštrt*. On the whole, this scene is very similar to that shown on the seated god stela from Ugarit (Aleppo 4622), which is discussed in section 4.3.2 above. Both portray a seated figure in Palm Out receiving homage from a

²⁷³ One is tempted to see this figure as the lion-headed goddess Sakhmet. However, the falcon head seems certain; cf. Avigad, *Corpus*, 273.

²⁷⁴ Avigad and Sass (*Corpus*, 273) identify the object in the falcon-headed female's hand as a "flower." However, this is unlikely in view of the object's flat top. The seated god stela from Ugarit (see section 4.3.2 above) provides another possible instance of a seated deity performing the Palm Out gesture toward a facing attendant with the left hand while holding an incense burner in the right hand.

confronted standing figure, and both include a winged sun disk above the scene. The Yahawwimilk stela is also similar in some respects: it also has the winged sun disk, and it shows both the seated goddess and the confronted standing figure performing the Palm Out gesture. Although there are minor differences in the composition of the scene (such as the presence of the mummiform figure behind the throne, the gender of the seated figure, and the bird heads of the confronted figures), and although we are dealing with different types of art objects, these pieces show that there is some continuity in the contexts in which the Palm Out gesture could occur in Levantine art.

The other stamp seals and bullae showing this gesture are described in the list below.

- | | |
|----------------------|--|
| Ashmolean
1914.57 | P, near Aleppo / male with no headdress, standing or striding, facing right, R in Palm Out with uraeus below (in front of scepter), L forward and grasping scepter; behind him are traces of bird or monkey on plant / Avigad, <i>Corpus</i> , 435-36 (no. 1149, back). |
| BLM 1099 | Unknown provenance / male with no discernible headdress, standing or striding, facing right, R in Palm Out , L forward and grasping staff; behind him is inscription giving name of seal owner / Avigad, <i>Corpus</i> , 441 (no. 1164). |
| BM 48488 | Unknown provenance / male with <i>atef</i> crown, standing on wheeled platform, facing right, R in Palm Out with uraeus below, L forward and grasping staff surmounted by double <i>maat</i> feathers; behind him is obelisk bearing inscription in strange characters; in field between figure and staff is inscription giving name of seal owner / R. D. Barnett, "The God on Wheels; or, the Seal of Shema," in O. Carruba, ed., <i>Studia mediterranea Piero Meriggi dicata</i> (Pavia: Aurora, 1979), 53-63; Avigad, <i>Corpus</i> , 447 (no. 1179). |
| BM 48494 | Unknown provenance / young male with no headdress, sitting on lotus, facing left, R in Palm Out , L across torso (apparently also with palm outward, but not coordinated with R) / Avigad, <i>Corpus</i> , 142 (no. 316). |
| BM 48499 | Unknown provenance / bearded male with no discernible headdress, standing, facing right, R in Palm Out , L forward and grasping <i>ankh</i> -headed scepter (<i>ankh</i> sign thus appears below hand in Palm Out); behind him is inscription giving seal owner's name / Avigad, <i>Corpus</i> , 377-78 (no. 1022). |

- BM 102974 Unknown provenance / male with no headdress, standing or striding, facing right, **R in Palm Out**, L forward and grasping scepter; behind him is inscription giving seal owner's name / Avigad, *Corpus*, 409 (no. 1081).
- BM 103278 Iron I-II Arban / male with conical headdress, seated, facing right, **R in Palm Out**, L forward and grasping plant; facing him is male with no discernible headdress, standing, R raised and almost touching mouth, L to the side; between them is *ankh* sign / Givon, *ESWA*, 158-59 (no. 9).
- BM 117919 Unknown provenance / male with no headdress, standing or striding, facing left, **R in Palm Out**, L to the side and holding *ankh* sign; facing him is male with no headdress, clothed identically to first figure, standing, facing right, L forward and grasping lotus scepter, R to the side and holding *ankh* sign; letters of inscription giving seal owner's name are interspersed in field / Avigad, *Corpus*, 429 (no. 1130).
- BM 130667 (back) Unknown provenance / scene similar but inferior to that on underside (see next): male with no discernible headdress, standing or striding, facing right, **R in Palm Out**, L forward and grasping scepter; behind him is *ankh* sign or perhaps highly stylized falcon on stand / Avigad, *Corpus*, 412 (no. 1090, back).
- BM 130667 (underside) Unknown provenance / male with modified Double Crown, standing or striding, facing right, **R in Palm Out** with *ankh* sign below and traces of sun disk in crescent above, L forward and grasping scepter; behind him is falcon on stand, facing right; inscription in exergue giving name of seal owner / Avigad, *Corpus*, 412 (no. 1090, underside).
- EIM 1263 Iron II Beth-guvrin / male with Double Crown, kneeling, facing right, **L in Palm Out**, R across torso; behind him is falcon with wings spread toward him; under them is Neb hieroglyph forming the exergue / Keel, *Corpus II*, 36-37 (no. 2).
- EIM K-71958 P, Unknown provenance / male with no discernible headdress, standing, facing left, **R in Palm Out**, L to the side, standing on oval containing inscription *śr h r* "governor of the city"; facing him is larger male with no discernible headdress, standing, L forward and grasping bow and arrows, R resting on sword hilt / Avigad, *Corpus*, 171 (no. 402).
- Florence NN Unknown provenance / male with modified Double Crown, standing or striding, facing right, **R in Palm Out** with four-pointed star above, L forward and grasping scepter; behind him is falcon on stand, facing right; inscription giving seal owner's name in exergue, but starting in front of figure's scepter because of insufficient space / Avigad, *Corpus*, 426 (no. 1122).
- Haifa H-2036 Unknown provenance / male with no headdress, standing, facing right, **R in Palm Out**, L forward and grasping scepter with two *maat* feathers at top; behind him is papyrus stalk or scepter / Avigad, *Corpus*, 95 (no. 146).

- IAA 33.3150 Iron II Samaria / bearded male with no headdress, standing, facing right, **R in Palm Out**, L to the side; before him is altar above which is crescent; facing him symmetrically, opposite altar, is another bearded male with no headdress, standing, **L in Palm Out**, R to the side / Avigad, *Corpus*, 407 (no. 1078).
- IAA 60-65 P, near Nicosia / male with beard and long robe but no discernible headdress, standing, facing left, **L in Palm Out** with *ankh* sign below, R forward and touching the *ankh* sign; before his face is star; before his hand in Palm Out is disk within crescent; behind him is inscription giving name of seal owner / Avigad, *Corpus*, 410 (no. 1084).
- IAA 69.20.661 Unknown provenance / male with Double Crown, standing or striding, facing right, **R in Palm Out** with eight-pointed star above and *ankh* sign below (in front of scepter), L forward and grasping lotus staff; behind him is inscription giving name of seal owner / Avigad, *Corpus*, 437 (no. 1153).
- IAA 71.46.84 Unknown provenance / male or female with no headdress, standing or striding, facing left, **L in Palm Out** with uraeus below, R forward and grasping scepter; behind him is falcon on stand, body facing left but head turned to right; inscription giving seal owner's name in exergue / Avigad, *Corpus*, 423 (no. 1118).
- IAA 73-43 Iron II Akko / female with no discernible headdress, seated, facing right, **L in Palm Out**, R extended forward; before her is *ankh* sign / Keel, *Corpus I*, 556-57 (no. 75).
- IAA 73-216 Iron II Akko / male with no headdress, standing, facing left, **R in Palm Out**, L to the side; in front of him is small ibex, facing left; facing him and separated from him by foliated double-cupped stand are three figures: (1) male or female figure with *atef* crown, seated on Egyptian-style throne, L forward in uncertain gesture; (2) male or female wearing conical headdress with streamer, standing, L holding animal-headed scepter aloft; (3) standing monkey, probably in Palms Out but not clearly represented; inscription (partially missing) above scene and between Palm Out figure and foliated stand, possibly giving name of seal owner²⁷⁵ / R. Giveon and A. Lemaire, "Sceau phénicien inscrit d' Akko avec scène religieuse," *Semitica* 35 (1985): 27-32, pl. 5b; Avigad, *Corpus*, 266-67 (no. 716); Keel, *Corpus I*, 536-37 (no. 19).
- IAA 91-2408 Iron II Akhzib / male with Double Crown, kneeling, facing right, **L in Palm Out** with Nefer sign below, R across torso; behind him is falcon with wings spread toward him, feet holding rod and ring / Keel, *Corpus I*, 60-61 (no. 117).

²⁷⁵ Note that this description, following Avigad, *Corpus*, 266-67, is of the seal, not the impression. Avigad also describes the seal this way due to the fact that the inscription is in positive.

- LIA EVII.21/36 Iron I-II Tell el-Far‘ah South / male with no discernible headdress, standing, facing right, **L in Palm Out**, R to the side; under him is Neb sign and before him is uncertain object²⁷⁶ / Keel, *Corpus* III, 172-73 (no. 333).
- Louvre AO 6006 P, Provenance unknown (purchased in Iraq) / male with Double Crown, standing or striding, facing left, **L in Palm Out**, R forward and grasping scepter; inscription giving seal owner’s name in exergue / Avigad, *Corpus*, 417 (no. 1103).
- Louvre AO 9048 Unknown provenance / male with no headdress, standing, facing right, **R in Palm Out**, L forward and grasping Sekhem scepter; behind him is *ankh* sign; facing him is symmetrical male figure (with **L in Palm Out**, R grasping Sekhem scepter) with *ankh* sign; below them is couchant lion, facing left, with triangle above back; above the two human figures is inscription giving name of seal owner / Avigad, *Corpus*, 274-75 (no. 738).
- Moussaieff NN P, Unknown provenance / male with obscured headdress, standing or striding, facing left, **L in Palm Out** with star above and sun disk in crescent in front, R forward and grasping staff; behind him is monkey on plant, facing left; inscription giving name of seal owner in exergue / Avigad, *Corpus*, 442 (no. 1167).
- PBN Chandon de Briailles 156 Unknown provenance / young male with horned sun disk headdress, kneeling on three lotuses, facing left, **R in Palm Out**, L across torso; inscription in field behind and before him gives name of seal owner / AOB, 166, 226 (no. 592); Avigad, *Corpus*, 51 (no. 4).
- PBN de Clercq 2756 Unknown provenance (alleged to be from Tyre) / male figure with rounded headdress, seated on cherub throne, facing left, **L in Palm Out**, R forward and grasping scepter / Avigad, *Corpus*, 274 (no. 736).
- PBN de Luynes 218 Unknown provenance / two-winged and bearded male with no headdress, standing or striding, facing right, **R in Palm Out**, L forward and grasping scepter; behind him is inscription giving seal owner’s name / Avigad, *Corpus*, 422 (no. 1114).
- PBN de Luynes 223 Unknown provenance / male with horned sun disk headdress or highly modified Double Crown, standing or striding, facing right, **R in Palm Out** with *ankh* sign below (in front of scepter), L forward and grasping scepter; behind him is second, larger *ankh* sign; inscription in exergue giving name of seal owner / Avigad, *Corpus*, 413 (no. 1093).
- PBN de Luynes 224 Unknown provenance / male with no headdress, standing or striding, facing left, **R in Palm Out**, L forward and grasping scepter; behind him is inscription giving name of seal owner / Avigad, *Corpus*, 411 (no. 1089).

²⁷⁶ The object is basically a tall and thin triangle with hatch marks. Keel identifies this object as a “stilisierter Baum” (Keel, *Corpus* III, 172). However, the identification is not very convincing; it could as easily be a standing stone or an architectural element (cf. Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar*, 543, nos. Aa30-31).

- PBN
Schlumberger
319 Unknown provenance / male with long robe and no headdress (bald head, or possibly skull cap), standing, facing right, **R in Palm Out**, L forward and grasping lotus scepter; before him is offering table bearing cup and stack of flatbread; above scene is inscription giving name of seal owner; below scene (under feet of figure and offering table) is Neb sign / W. F. Albright, "The Canaanite God Hauron (Horon)," *American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures* 53 (1936): 6; Avigad, *Corpus*, 383-84 (no. 1041).
- PBN Seyrig
1972.1317.124 Unknown provenance / male with Double Crown, standing or striding, facing right, **R in Palm Out** with eight-pointed star above and large horned uraeus below, L forward and grasping staff; behind him are (from top to bottom) eight-pointed star, obscure figure with outstretched wings facing right, cartouche, plant; inscription giving name of seal owner in exergue / Avigad, *Corpus*, 447-48 (no. 1181).
- PBN Seyrig
1972.1317.139 Unknown provenance / male with Double Crown, standing or striding, facing right, **R in Palm Out**, L forward and grasping scepter; behind him is monkey with sun disk and crescent on head, seated on short scepter, facing right; inscription giving name of seal owner in exergue / Avigad, *Corpus*, 415 (no. 1099).
- PMB 5117 Unknown provenance / male or female with no headdress, standing, facing right, **L in Palm Out**, R to the side; facing him is male or female with no headdress, standing, facing left, **R in Palm Out**, L to the side; between them and below gesturing hands is crescent; inscription in exergue gives name of seal owner / Avigad, *Corpus*, 384-85 (no. 1044).
- Reshef NN Iron II Beth-shean / male with Double Crown, kneeling, facing right, **L in Palm Out**, R extended behind and grasping mace or scepter / Keel, *Corpus* II, 184-85 (no. 199).
- Rockefeller
32.762 Persian Period 'Atlit / male or female (mostly missing), seated, facing right, **L in Palm Out**, R missing; before him/her are tall lotus plant and Nefer sign / Keel, *Corpus* I, 764-65 (no. 19).
- Rosen NN P, Unknown provenance / male with Double Crown, standing or striding, facing right, **R in Palm Out**, L forward and grasping scepter; flanking him are two seated monkeys, facing inward, in Palms Out; winged sun disk hovering above scene; inscription giving name of seal owner in exergue / Avigad, *Corpus*, 414 (no. 1096).
- PLU (81) Iron II Akko / male with no discernible headdress, standing, facing right, **L in Palm Out**, R to the side; before him are two spread-winged birds, one above the other; symmetrical standing male figure opposite / Keel, *Corpus* I, 598-99 (no. 195).
- PLU (82) Unknown provenance / male with no headdress, standing or striding, facing right, **R in Palm Out**, L forward and grasping scepter or staff; in field above and behind figure is inscription giving name of seal owner / Avigad, *Corpus*, 444-45 (no. 1173).

- PLU (83) P, Unknown provenance / ibis-headed male with no discernible headdress, standing or striding, facing right, **R in Palm Out** with *ankh* sign below, L forward and grasping papyrus roll or other short object; facing him is mummiform male holding *was* scepter with both hands; above the two figures is sun disk in crescent; inscription giving name of seal owner in exergue / Avigad, *Corpus*, 445-46 (no. 1176).
- PLU (84) Unknown provenance / bearded male with long robe and no headdress, standing, facing right, **R in Palm Out**, L not visible; before him is altar above which is crescent; facing him symmetrically, opposite altar, is another bearded male with long robe and no headdress, standing, **L in Palm Out**, R not visible / Avigad, *Corpus*, 379 (no. 1026).

Most stamp seals show only a single gesturing figure without an explicit target. However, some examples with targets occur, and these examples are precisely in line with the types attested on cylinder and scarab seals (as well as on other media). Table 23 shows the various targets attested, the examples of each target, and the comparable type of target on cylinder seals (cf. table 22):

Table 23. Targets of the Palm Out Gesture on Stamp Seals

Target	Examples	= CS type
confronted enthroned figure	IAA 73-216, PBN de Clercq 2504	1
confronted standing attendant(s)	BM 103278, PBN de Clercq 2504	2
standing mummiform deity	PLU (83)	5
divine symbol(s)	Moussaieff NN	6
confronted standing figure, also in Palm Out	IAA 33.3150, PMB 5117, PLU (84)	9
other human target	EIM K-71958	10

The stamp seal PBN Schlumberger 319 is also an interesting case. On this seal, what is directly in line with the standing figure's Palm Out gesture is the part of the inscription giving the divine name element of the seal owner's name, *ḥwrn*. It could be that this part of the inscription serves a dual function, both as part of the seal owner's name and as the target of the gesture. In this kind

of scene, which includes a standing figure performing the Palm Out gesture while approaching an offering table, we would expect the target of the gesture to be a seated figure on the other side of the offering table, facing the approaching figure (cf. type 1 in tables 22 and 23). The differences in this case (the lack of an explicit seated figure and the possible double role of the divine name element) are most likely due to lack of space on the seal.

In some cases, the agent of the Palm Out gesture on Iron Age stamp seals shows clear continuity with types known from Bronze Age glyptic art as discussed above. The most prominent example of this is the seated deity, attested on five stamp seals in our corpus. However, the most common Iron Age glyptic motif in which the Palm Out gesture occurs is that of a lone male figure, striding and holding a staff or scepter in the non-gesturing hand. There are twenty-one examples of this motif attested on stamp seals. In some instances, the lone figure appears to be a deity: in the case of BM 48488, the figure has an elaborate *atef* crown and stands upon a wheeled platform (Barnett has suggested that this represents a deity being towed in a procession²⁷⁷); in the case of PBN de Luynes 218, the figure has a pair of wings. However, in other instances, the figure wears no headdress and carries no mark of special status other than the scepter or staff; it would seem that the figure in these instances is no more than a mortal person. Other motifs on the stamp seals are also novel compared to earlier glyptic art; these include two Egyptianizing motifs: (1) a kneeling male wearing a crown, behind whom is a bird with its wings spread forward as if to protect the kneeling figure; and (2) the child Horus (Harpokrates) kneeling or sitting on a large lotus bud. The examples of the seated deity and of these other motifs are given in the following list.

²⁷⁷ R. D. Barnett, "The God on Wheels; or, the Seal of Shema," in *Studia mediterranea Piero Meriggi dicata*, ed. O. Carruba (Pavia: Aurora, 1979), 53-63.

seated deity: PBN de Clercq 2504, BM 103278, IAA 73-43, PBN de Clercq 2756, Rockefeller 32.762
standing male with scepter or staff: Ashmolean 1914.57, BLM 1099, BM 48488, BM 48499, BM 102974, BM 130667 (underside), BM 130667 (back), Florence NN, Haifa H-2036, IAA 60-65, IAA 69.20.661, IAA 71.46.84, Louvre AO 6006, Moussaieff NN, PBN de Luynes 218, PBN de Luynes 223, PBN de Luynes 224, PBN Seyrig 1972.1317.124, PBN Seyrig 1972.1317.139, Rosen NN, PLU (82)
kneeling male figure with spread-winged bird behind: EIM 1263, IAA 91-2408
Harpokrates on lotus: BM 48494, PBN Chandon de Briailles 156

Symbols depicted near the gesturing hand on Iron Age stamp seals are a good illustration of the fact that these seals are the iconographic heirs of both the cylinder seal and the scarab. Two symbols commonly occur near the gesturing hand on the Iron Age seals: the *ankh* sign (BM 48499, BM 103278, BM 130667 [underside], IAA 60-65, IAA 69.20.661, IAA 73-43, PBN de Luynes 223, PLU [83]) and the uraeus (Ashmolean 1914.57, BM 48488, IAA 71.46.84, PBN Seyrig 1972.1317.124). The seal BM 48499 is an interesting case, as the *ankh* sign in this instance also functions as the top of the scepter in the agent's non-gesturing hand.

4.3.5. Metal Bowls Showing Palm Out

Three Phoenician metal bowls show scenes in which the Palm Out gesture is used. These bowls come from excavations in Italy and Cyprus, but in terms of style they belong to the Phoenician sphere.²⁷⁸ Two of these show a standing or striding figure performing the gesture in a procession, while the third shows two kneeling figures.

²⁷⁸ See the discussion and references to Perrot and Markoe in section 4.2.5 above.

- Calabria NN Iron II Francavilla Marittima (Calabria, Italy) / female with no headdress, standing or striding, feet facing left but head and gesturing hand turned to the right, **L in Palm Out (to the right)**, R forward (to the left) and grasping scepter; facing her (to the right) is male figure in Palms Out; in front of her (to the left) is long procession of deities, facing left / Markoe, *Bowls*, 161-62, 232 (no. Ca1).
- Nicosia NN Iron II Salamis, Cyprus / two standing or striding figures in procession, facing right: first figure (on right) is male with top of head missing, R extended forward with hand missing (possibly in Palm Out), L forward and grasping scepter; second figure (on left) is falcon-headed female with long robe but no discernible headdress, **R in Palm Out**, L forward and grasping *was* scepter; rest of scene missing / Markoe, *Bowls*, 185-86, 268-69 (no. Cy20).
- RMVG 61574 Iron II Praeneste / male with Double Crown, kneeling, facing right, **R in Palm Out**, L forward and grasping feather-topped scepter; behind him is falcon with wings spread toward him; before him is human-headed winged scarab with *atef* crown; symmetrical kneeling figure opposite (mostly obscured); scene takes place on reed boat / Frankfort, *Art and Architecture*, 199-200, fig. 97; Markoe, *Bowls*, 188-91, 274-75 (no. E1).

The two bowls for which a target of the Palm Out gesture can be identified are Calabria NN and RMVG 61574. On Calabria NN, the target is a male with a short headdress, standing and performing the Palms Out gesture. Since the agent here is probably a goddess (she is walking at the end of a long procession of deities), this is roughly comparable to the common motif of a seated deity performing the Palm Out gesture toward a standing attendant, the main difference being that the deity here is standing rather than seated. On RMVG 61574, the scene is easily classifiable as the motif of flanking figures performing the Palm Out gesture toward a central scarab, as seen on ivories and scarab seals.²⁷⁹ The scene takes place on an Egyptian-style reed boat, like the ivory BM 2011.6001.444. It may also be noted that the spread-winged bird behind the crowned kneeling figure's head links this motif with the stamp seals EIM 1263 and IAA 91-2408. Finally, on the bowl Nicosia NN, the falcon-headed female figure performs the Palm Out

²⁷⁹ The scarab in this case has a (female) human head. For this type of scarab in Phoenician art, see Gubel, "Phoenician Glyptic Iconography," 122-23.

gesture toward the back of a standing male figure; since part of the scene is missing, it is not certain whether this male figure or another entity is the target of the gesture.

4.3.6. Metal Plaque and Pendants Showing Palm Out

Finally, one metal plaque and four metal pendants from the Levant also attest the Palm Out gesture. All of these five items come from controlled excavations and are from Late Bronze Age contexts: the plaque is from Hazor, two of the pendants are from Ugarit, and the other pendants are from Beth-shean and Tell Abu Hawam. The Hazor plaque, which shows a standing male in Palm Out, is shown in figure 20.²⁸⁰

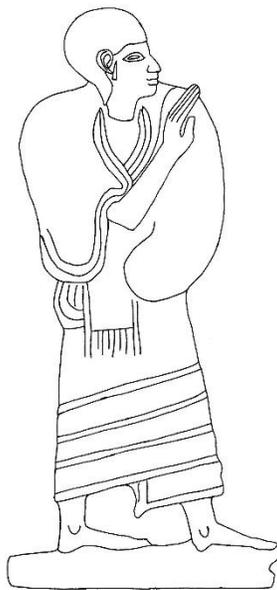


Figure 20. Bronze plaque of standing figure from Hazor.
Drawn by the author after Yadin, *Hazor III-IV*, pl. 339.1.

The man represented here wears a long wrapped robe and a short and rounded headdress or skull cap; his right hand is raised in Palm Out, while his left hand is tucked into his robe. Tenons on

²⁸⁰ Yadin, *Hazor III-IV*, pl. 339.1; Negbi, 44-45, 170, pl. 31 (no. 1434); *ANESTP*, 341, 373 (no. 772); Keel, *Symbolism of the Biblical World*, 311, fig. 415; Aharon Kempinski, "The Middle Bronze Age," in *The Archaeology of Ancient Israel*, ed. Amnon Ben-Tor, transl. R. Greenberg (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 200, fig. 6.33.

the back side of the plaque indicate that it may have been mounted on a backing as part of a larger scene. This figure is very similar to figures on two stelae from Ugarit and on cylinder seals, as discussed above. The similarity of this plaque to the smaller figure on the “Baal au foudre” stela from Ugarit has been noted by Negbi.²⁸¹

The Late Bronze Age gold pendant from Beth-shean (Rockefeller J. 3810), on which is depicted a nude goddess in standing posture, is shown in figure 21.²⁸²

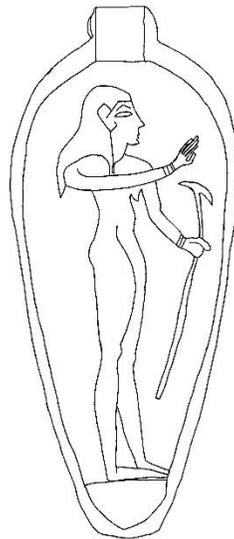


Figure 21. Gold pendant showing standing goddess, from Beth-shean.
Drawn by the author after Pritchard, *ANEP*, 165 (no. 478).

The goddess raises her right hand in Palm Out, while her left hand holds a *was* scepter.

The following list summarizes the data for the remaining three pendants.

²⁸¹ Negbi, *Canaanite Gods in Metal*, 44-45.

²⁸² Alan Rowe, *The Four Canaanite Temples of Beth-shan*, Part 1: The Temples and Cult Objects (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1940), pl. 68a (no. 5); *ANEP*, 165, 305 (no. 478); Patrick E. McGovern, *Late Bronze Palestinian Pendants: Innovation in a Cosmopolitan Age* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985), 30-31, 114, pl. 5 (no. 65); John P. O'Neill, ed., *Treasures of the Holy Land: Ancient Art from the Israel Museum* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1986), 127 (no. 63); Cornelius, *Many Faces*, 115, unnumbered plate (cat. no. 3.10). The object type (metal pendant) and the motif of the nude female in Palm Out are basically Levantine, despite the Egyptian elements visible on this piece; see McGovern, *Late Bronze Palestinian Pendants*, 30.

- Rockefeller J. 34.239 LB Tell Abu Hawam / male or female with no discernible headdress, standing or striding, facing left, **R in Palm Out**, L to the side / R. W. Hamilton, "Excavations and Tell Abu Hawam," *Quarterly of the Department of Antiquities in Palestine* 4 (1935): 64, pl. 39 (no. 416); Negbi, 44-45, 170 (no. 1435); Patrick E. McGovern, *Late Bronze Palestinian Pendants: Innovation in a Cosmopolitan Age* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985), 33, 115, pl. 6 (no. 76).
- PLU (85) LB Ugarit / female with no headdress, seated on throne, facing right, **R in Palm Out**, L holding plant or scepter / Negbi, 101, 119, 191 (no. 1703); Cornelius, *Many Faces*, 110, unnumbered plate (cat. no. 2.6b).
- PLU (86) LB Ugarit / female with no headdress, seated on throne with footstool, facing right, **one hand in Palm Out with hand lowered so that palm is almost parallel to ground**, other hand holding plant-like object (level of detail insufficient to distinguish right from left hand) / Negbi, 100-101, 191 (no. 1704); Cornelius, *Many Faces*, 110, unnumbered plate (cat. no. 2.6a).

The plaque and pendants do not show the agent of the Palm Out gesture in a larger context, so they provide no data on the setting and target of the Palm Out gesture. However, the characteristics of the agents of the gesture on these pieces may be compared with those known from other media. For example, the plaque from Hazor is a good example of the male figure with rounded headdress and wrapped robe, his non-gesturing hand tucked into his robe, as seen on the "Baal au foudre" stela from Ugarit and on numerous cylinder seals. The seated female on pendants PLU (85) and PLU (86) is most likely a deity; these two examples compare well with other examples of the seated deity in statuary, stone relief, ivory carving, and glyptic art.

4.3.7. Contextual Comparison of Palm Out and Gesture Phrases

Studies of Levantine art objects depicting the Palm Out gesture typically describe the gesture using the function-terms *gesture of greeting* (or *salutation*), *gesture of blessing* (or *benediction*), and *gesture of adoration*.²⁸³ The term *gesture of blessing* (or *benediction*) is most

²⁸³ The equivalent French terms, which occur in some of the earliest publications on this subject, are *geste d'accueil*, *geste de bénédiction*, and *geste d'adoration* respectively. See below for references including the use of

frequently used when a deity performs the gesture toward a mortal, while the term *gesture of adoration* is restricted to instances in which a mortal performs the gesture toward a deity. These terms were applied to the Palm Out gesture in scholarship at least as early as 1911. As far as we have been able to discover, the interpretations of the gesture implied by the use of these terms do not arise from explicit analyses of the data for this gesture. In effect, they are simple assumptions that have, through force of repetition, acquired the status of common-sense dicta.²⁸⁴

These interpretations exclude possible links to gestures described in Northwest Semitic texts. Gestures of greeting are not attested in the Hebrew Bible nor in early Northwest Semitic inscriptions. Likewise, there is no one-handed blessing gesture attested. One recalls the priestly blessing gesture mentioned in Leviticus 9:22; however, according to the vocalized Masoretic text, this gesture explicitly uses two hands, not one.²⁸⁵ Similarly, the only gestures that qualify as “gestures of adoration” in Northwest Semitic texts are explicitly described as using two hands.

The interpretations previously applied to the Palm Out gesture are also inadequate in view of the iconographic data. The fact that the gesture is identical whether performed by a

these terms. Stefan Przeworski, in “Notes d’archéologie syrienne et hittite: I: Les figurines assises et le char divin,” *Syria* 9 (1928): 275, differs from most others in using the term “geste de commandement” to describe the Palm Out gesture. Unfortunately, Przeworski does not explain why he uses this term.

²⁸⁴ Early studies in which these terms are used include the following: A. de Ridder, *Collection de Clercq VII: Les bijoux et les pierres gravées* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1911), 2:488 (no. 2504) (“une main levée en signe d’adoration”); René Dussaud, “L’Art syrien du deuxième millénaire avant notre ère,” *Syria* 7 (1926): 341 (“geste de bénédiction”); G. Contenau, *Manuel d’archéologie orientale* (Paris: Editions Auguste Picard, 1931), 3:1475-76 (describing the Yahawwimilk stela: “la Dame de Byblos...tend l’autre main en un geste d’accueil,” while the king “réalise le geste conventionnel de l’adorant devant la divinité”); *ibid.*, 3:1477-78 (“Ashtar...lève la main gauche en signe de bon accueil et tient de la main droite la coupe que lui offre un adorant”). The closest thing to an argument that we have been able to find for the use of these terms is in a study by Maurice Dunand, “Encore la stèle de Yehavmilk roi de Byblos,” *Bulletin du Musée de Beyrouth* 5 (1941): 72, in which Dunand uses these terms for the Palm Out gesture and cites an article by S. Langdon, “Gesture in Sumerian and Babylonian Prayer,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* (1919): 531-56. However appropriate a comparison with Mesopotamian material may be, a careful reading of Langdon’s article reveals that the gesture to which he applies the terms *gestus adorationis*, *adoration*, *salutation*, and *greeting* is not Palm Out at all, but rather Palm In.

²⁸⁵ The consonantal text reads *ydw*, which could be understood as a singular, “his hand.” However, the vocalized text and the various versions overwhelmingly support a plural reading as “his hands.” The defective writing of the plural, both in the word for “hand” and in other words, is common in the Pentateuch and is not sufficient to justify an emendation of the vocalized text. As a rule, the Masoretic biblical text is specific as to the number of hands used in gestures. This contrasts with Akkadian sources, which are not always specific in this regard; see Christopher G. Frechette, *Mesopotamian Ritual-prayers of “Hand-lifting”* (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2012), 51-53.

mortal addressing a deity or vice versa, with no consistent variation in height or distance from the body, belies interpretations that asymmetrically assign the functions of “adoration” in the one case and “greeting or blessing” in the other.²⁸⁶ These interpretations also do not fit with the “Covenant Stela” from Ugarit, on which two mortals, each identical in pose and in gesture to a mortal standing before a deity, face each other across an altar as if engaged in a formal transaction. Finally, the “greeting,” “blessing,” and “adoration” interpretations all fail to explain examples in which the Palm Out gesture is performed in a hostile context (see the section on Setting below).

There is sufficient justification, therefore, to set aside the previous interpretations of the Palm Out gesture as we compare it with gestures described in Northwest Semitic texts. As we attempt to show in this section, it is possible to link the Palm Out gesture in Levantine iconography with several Northwest Semitic phrases used to describe gestures of lifting or putting forth the hand in ritual contexts. In the majority of instances, Palm Out may be linked with the phrase *nʾśōʾ yʾd (+adv)_{oath}* “lift up the hand (+adv)_{oath}” and its synonyms, which occur in the Hebrew Bible in descriptions of oath-taking (either in the context of a divine decree or, occasionally, in human transactions). In a smaller group of instances, links may be made with various other uses of the basic gesture phrase *nʾtan yʾd* “put forth the hand.” These links are made primarily on the basis of comparison between elements of context, also taking into consideration the details of the gesture as depicted and described. Although the question of the gesture’s function is temporarily set aside here, it will be taken up in chapter 5, where the results

²⁸⁶ In this respect, the situation in the Northwest Semitic sphere contrasts with that in Mesopotamia. As Frechette has recently shown, Mesopotamian ritual hand-lifting gestures can generally be differentiated into two types based on status: (1) upward hand gestures performed by mortals toward deities, and (2) horizontal gestures performed by deities toward mortals. See Frechette, *Mesopotamian Ritual-prayers*, 28-50.

of previous scholarship are discussed and evaluated on the basis of the combined data from chapters 2-4.

4.3.7.1. Setting

The most common clearly-defined setting for the performance of the Palm Out gesture in Levantine art is the temple, including the cella and the space surrounding an altar or offering table. Scenes of rendering homage to a seated deity, in which the seated deity and/or the approaching figures may perform the Palm Out gesture, imply a temple setting as the place where the deity would be seated on his/her dais and would receive worshippers. In many examples of this type of scene, an offering table, altar, or incense stand is explicitly depicted, which provides a concrete indicator of a temple setting. These examples include cylinder seals and stamp seals, as shown in table 24.

Table 24. Seals Showing Palm Out and Including Temple Furniture

Type of object	Museum number	Type of furniture depicted
cylinder seal	Amman NN	offering table loaded with offerings
“	Ashmolean 1913.336	offering table loaded with offerings
“	Damascus 2841	offering table loaded with offerings
“	Damascus 2924	short offering table
“	Damascus 3000	offering table loaded with offerings
“	PLU (63)	offering table loaded with offerings
stamp seal	IAA 73-216	incense stand
“	PBN Schlumberger 319	offering table loaded with offerings

Scenes of a deity receiving homage are, of course, fully depicted only in two-dimensional media. In the case of the seated deity figurines discussed in section 4.3.1, the real setting in which the object would be placed could correspond to the scene of the seated deity receiving homage as

shown in two-dimensional representations, assuming that some of these figurines served as objects of worship.²⁸⁷

In addition to scenes of a seated deity receiving homage, scenes showing confronted standing or kneeling figures, with one or both figures performing the Palm Out gesture toward the other, may also include an altar between the figures. Examples of this type of scene with an altar or similar piece of furniture between the figures include the stela Aleppo 4818 (the “Covenant Stela” from Ugarit), in which a table bearing tablets sits between the figures; the cylinder seals Antakya 7992, PLU (61), PLU (62), and PLU (67); and the stamp seals IAA 33.3150 and PLU (84). Also noteworthy in this connection is the cylinder seal Newell 317, which shows a standing figure in Palm Out facing toward a confronted pair that flanks an altar, even though neither of the figures in the confronted pair itself performs the Palm Out gesture.

In the Hebrew Bible, examples of *nʿśwʿ yʿd (+adv)_{oath}* “lift up the hand (+adv)_{oath}” generally occur in the descriptive setting of a first-person utterance by Yahweh concerning his performance of an oath (see section 3.2.2). The physical setting in which Yahweh takes the oath in these instances is presumably either his celestial court or his temple cella on earth. Examples of synonymous phrases, however, describe oaths taken by mortals and sometimes include more explicit references to the setting.

²⁸⁷ Seeden, “Peace Figurines,” 119-20, argues that the function of these figurines “was to serve as votive offerings in the sanctuaries of the major urban gods.” However, she also suggests that these figurines were installed in the sanctuaries, consecrated, worshipped, given offerings, and perhaps carried in processions. “The enthroned god,” writes Seeden, “blesses his votary, a gesture which embodies the hope that what has been asked in the prayer may be granted, be it health, production of grain, offspring, or wealth.” Seeden’s view contains a tension between the function of popular votary object and the function of object of worship in the official cult, but she does not comment on this issue. In general on the functions of anthropomorphic and theriomorphic figurines in the Levant, see also Karel van der Toorn, “Israelite Figurines: A View from the Texts,” in *Sacred Time, Sacred Place: Archaeology and the Religion of Israel*, ed. Barry M. Gittlen (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2002), 45-62. In the view of the present writer, the seated deity figurines could indeed serve as objects of worship in the official cult or in household shrines, although they could also serve an apotropaic function (see below in this section). This view is based on the relative rarity of this kind of figurine, the materials (bronze and precious metal), and the generally fine quality of manufacture. Archaeological context does not count for or against the use of these figurines as objects of worship, since few have a documented archaeological context, and it is likely that even these have been moved by their devotees from the contexts in which they were originally used.

Table 25. Settings for the Raising of One Hand to Take an Oath

Full gesture phrase	Reference	Setting	Reference for setting
<i>heriʿm yəd ʿel-T</i> “raise the hand toward T”	Genesis 14:22-23	possibly at or near temple of El Elyon	cf. Genesis 14:17-18
<i>heniʿp yəd ʿal-T_{ref}</i> “elevate the hand concerning T _{ref} ”	Job 31:21-22	<i>bašša ʿar</i> “at the gate”	Job 31:21
<i>nətan yəd ləP_{obl}</i> “put forth the hand to P _{obl} ”	Ezra 10:18-19	<i>rəho^wb beʿt hə^ʿlohⁱm</i> “the temple plaza”	Ezra 10:9

In the case of Abram’s gesture in Genesis 14, the setting is not explicitly stated, but there are contextual hints that it might be in the temple precinct of El Elyon. These include the fact that the high priest Melchizedek “brings forth” bread and wine (verse 18), his formal blessing of Abram (verses 19-20), and the constituent “to El Elyon” in the gesture phrase (verse 22).²⁸⁸ In Job 31:21, the “gate” could be the city gate or the temple gate. The temple setting is explicit in Ezra 10:9. In general, in the ancient Near East, oaths were often taken at the temple in the presence of deity.²⁸⁹

Two other phrases that occur in less commonly attested contexts in the Hebrew Bible also describe the raising of one hand in a ritual action that could take place in a sacred setting. Both use the basic gesture phrase *nətan yəd* “put forth the hand.” One of these is *nətan yəd (+adv)_{pledge}*, which is used to describe the raising of one hand in a pledge of allegiance. In 1 Chronicles 29:23-24, officials and warriors perform this gesture to Solomon as he sits on the “throne of

²⁸⁸ While these points allow for a temple location, it should be noted that they are not conclusive. The cultic significance of the bread and wine, for example, has been challenged by Robert Houston Smith, “Abram and Melchizedek (Gen 14:18-20),” *ZAW* 36 (1965): 136, inter alia. See there also for references concerning the cultic significance of the scene, and cf. John G. Gammie, “Loci of the Melchizedek Tradition of Genesis 14:18-20,” *JBL* 90 (1971): 390, 392, 394.

²⁸⁹ M. San Nicolò, “Eid,” *RdA*, 2:306.

Yahweh,” likely as part of an enthronement ceremony taking place in the royal palace.²⁹⁰ Other examples of this phrase take place in more mundane settings (2 Kings 10:15; Lamentations 5:6). The other phrase is *nʿtan yad ləT* “put forth the hand to T,” which is used to describe a gesture performed as one approaches God in the temple (2 Chronicles 30:8). We would suggest that these two phrases, in addition to *nšʿo’ yad (+adv)_{oath}*, may match Palm Out in certain clearly-defined contexts (see further below).

In addition to the foregoing examples in which the overall setting appears to be peaceful, there are some cases in which it is most likely hostile. For example, the gold-covered figurine of the seated god from Ugarit (Damascus 3573) was found carefully deposited in the foundation of a building, together with two smiting god figurines and a bull figurine on a base with a large tang. These four figurines were arranged in a particular formation within the deposit, with the seated god in front center, the two smiting gods flanking and slightly recessed from him, and the bull immediately behind the seated god.²⁹¹ The co-occurrence with two smiting gods and the formation in which the group of figurines was laid out definitely suggest that the seated god served a defensive function.²⁹² In addition, the cylinder seal Aleppo 4765 shows a smiting god figure simultaneously performing the Palm Out gesture. Although the figures directly in front of the smiting god do not appear hostile, the combination of Palm Out with a gesture that is most certainly hostile may point to a similarity in function between the two gestures, as if the figure

²⁹⁰ Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961), 106-7; Peter R. Ackroyd, *I & II Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1973), 95-96; Keel, *Symbolism of the Biblical World*, 263-64.

²⁹¹ C. F. A. Schaeffer, “Nouveaux témoignages du culte de El et de Baal a Ras Shamra-Ugarit et ailleurs en Syrie-Palestine,” *Syria* 43 (1966): 7-9.

²⁹² Cf. Zainab Bahrani, *Rituals of War: The Body and Violence in Mesopotamia* (New York: Zone Books, 2008), 52, in which she describes the performative and protective function of certain Mesopotamian images, including clay *lahmu* and *apkallu* figurines placed under floors (among other locations). To be sure, the reason for the figurine deposit at Ugarit is not clear. However, if this were simply a favissa, votive deposit, or precautionary “hiding-place” (Caquot and Szyzner, *Ugaritic Religion*, 22-23), one would not expect such a careful arrangement of the figures. Thus a defensive function seems likely, regardless of the overall nature of the deposit.

were lifted from a setting in which he would both perform the Palm Out gesture and smite an unknown addressee. (It is also possible to interpret the two gestures as unrelated, as if there were a conceptual dividing line drawn through the vertical axis of the figure, with the Fist Up gesture helping to identify the god and the Palm Out gesture tying the figure to the overall scene.) This idea of a hostile setting for the Palm Out gesture is also appropriate for the metal pendants discussed in section 4.3.6, since pendants typically had an apotropaic function.²⁹³ In these cases, the gesture could be performed toward invisible hostile forces, including the evil eye. In virtually none of these cases can the context of the Palm Out gesture be construed as propitiatory, since the agent of the gesture is always a deity (often a high-ranking deity, such as a seated god or goddess), who would be expected to exert power rather than seek propitiation.²⁹⁴

These examples of Palm Out in a hostile setting compare well with examples of *נָסַח 'ַיָּד (+adv)_{oath}* in which the content of the oath is hostile. In Deuteronomy 32:40-41, for example, Yahweh swears with uplifted hand to bring down vengeance on his adversaries and get even with those who hate him; he also mentions whetting his flashing sword, which is reminiscent of the figure in Aleppo 4765 who performs Fist Up with a mace while lifting his other hand in Palm Out. Also in this category are Ezekiel 20:23 (in which Yahweh lifts his hand in oath to disperse and scatter the Target) and Psalm 106:26-27 (in which Yahweh lifts his hand in oath to fell the Target). Like the examples of Palm Out in a hostile context, examples of *נָסַח 'ַיָּד (+adv)_{oath}* in which the content of the oath is hostile represent a minority of the instances of this gesture. Thus,

²⁹³ See, for example, Philip J. King and Lawrence E. Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 276-77.

²⁹⁴ By contrast, cylinder seals on which the Palm Out gesture is performed toward a hostile animal are not admissible as examples of a hostile setting, since the action in these cases is best analyzed as propitiatory. For example, on Newell 315, a standing figure performs Palm Out toward a rampant griffin, but the agent also holds a rabbit by the foot, seemingly as an offering. On Louvre AO 14814, a kneeling figure performs the gesture toward a lion whose forepaw is raised in a hostile manner, but the kneeling posture of the agent should communicate humility and may point to propitiation.

at least in terms of the overall setting in which the gesture is performed, there is a fairly close match between Palm Out and *nšw' yd (+adv)_{oath}* and its synonyms.

Another non-peaceful setting for the Palm Out gesture is the domination scene shown on the carved ivories Birmingham 451'65g, BM 2011.6001.365, BISI NN (3), IM 62667, IM 65371, IM 65393, IM NN (ND 13084), MFA 65.918, and ROM 959.91.6. These ivories show a sphinx resting its paw on the head of a mortal male, who is sprawled out on his belly and who performs the Palm Out gesture toward an entity that lies outside the edge of the piece.²⁹⁵ This context is quite different from others in which the Palm Out gesture occurs, and it cannot easily be interpreted as having to do with oath-taking. This may therefore be treated as a separate contextual category not directly connected with *nšw' yd (+adv)_{oath}* “lift up the hand (+adv)_{oath}” and its synonyms. It may be suitable to compare Palm Out in this domination scene with *nštan yd* in Jeremiah 50:14-15, which describes a gesture of surrender in a battle setting.²⁹⁶

4.3.7.2. Inscriptions

The Yahawwimilk stela from Byblos (Louvre AO 22368) stands out among the art objects that show the Palm Out gesture, since it bears a relatively long Phoenician inscription that relates indirectly to the gesture depicted on the stela (see figure 11 above). The relevant parts of this inscription read as follows:

²⁹⁵ As discussed in section 4.3.3 above, we agree with LeMon, against Gubel, that the sphinx is shown as dominating rather than protecting the sprawled-out man. See LeMon, *Yahweh's Winged Form*, 91-94. The placing of the paw on the man's head may be similar to the gesture of placing the foot on the neck of a defeated enemy (Joshua 10:24), and in any case, it would be a rather odd way of protecting the person.

²⁹⁶ It is also conceivable that this has to do with a pledge of allegiance, yet the setting appears much more hostile than the iconographic scenes and texts that we adduce as examples of the pledge of allegiance (see above in this section and below in the section on agents). Ultimately, it becomes a question of whether pledging allegiance and surrendering should or should not be considered the same. In our analysis, the two are distinguished by the simple criterion of the nature of the setting: a pledge of allegiance takes place in a peaceful or ambiguous setting, while surrender takes place in a hostile setting.

KAI 10:1-3, 6-11 (1) 'nk yḥwmlk mlk gbl bn yḥrb' l bn bn 'rmlk mlk (2) gbl 'š p' ltn hrbt b' lt gbl mmlkt ' l gbl wqr' 'nk (3) 't rbty b' lt gbl wšm' [h'] ql... (6) p' l 'nk (7) yḥwmlk mlk gbl lrbty b' lt gbl km' š qr' t 't rbty (8) b' lt gbl wšm' ql wp' l ly n' m tbrk b' lt gbl 'yt yḥwmlk (9) mlk gbl wḥww wt' rk ymw wšntw ' l gbl k mlk šdq h' wtn (10) [lw hrbt b] 'lt gbl ḥn l' n ' lnm wl' n ' m ' rš z wḥn ' m ' r- (11) š z

(1) I am Yahawwimilk, king of Byblos, son of Yiḥarba' l, grandson of Urimilk king (2) of Byblos, whom the Mistress, the Lady of Byblos, made ruler over Byblos. I called (3) upon my Mistress, the Lady of Byblos, and she heard my voice... (6) I, (7) Yahawwimilk, king of Byblos, made (several monuments) for my Mistress, the Lady of Byblos. When I called upon my Mistress, (8) the Lady of Byblos, she heard my voice and performed kindness to me.²⁹⁷ May the Lady of Byblos bless Yahawwimilk, (9) king of Byblos, give him life, and prolong his days and years over Byblos, for he is a righteous king. May the Mistress, the Lady of Byblos, grant (10) him (her) favor in the sight of the gods and in the sight of the people of this land, as well as the favor of the people of this la- (11) nd.

Although this inscription does not contain a direct reference to the gesture performed by the two figures depicted in the lunette, it elucidates some aspects of the gesture's context. First, it enables us to identify the two agents of the gesture: the seated female on the left is the goddess *b' lt gbl* “the Lady of Byblos,” and the standing male on the right is king Yahawwimilk. Second, the figures' reciprocal gesture corresponds to reciprocal actions of the two agents as mentioned in the inscription: Yahawwimilk has dedicated several monuments to the goddess in return for her having “performed kindness” to him, and he now asks the goddess to bless him, give him life, prolong his days, and give him favor as a reward for his being a righteous king. In light of the inscription, it is reasonable to suggest that the king is depicted making an offering to the Lady of

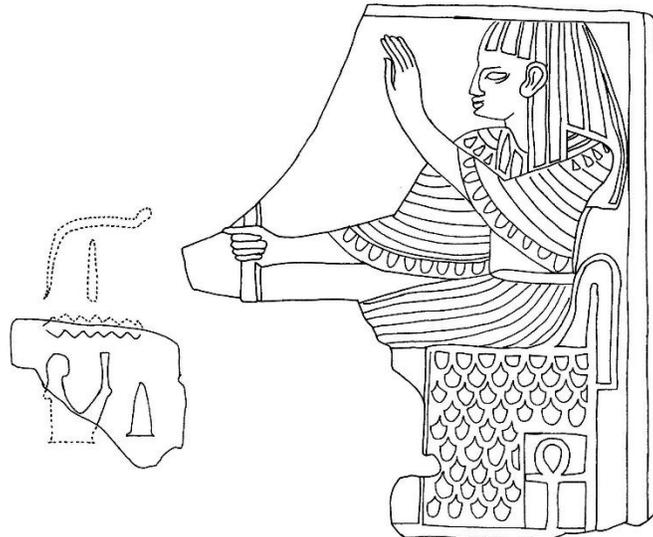
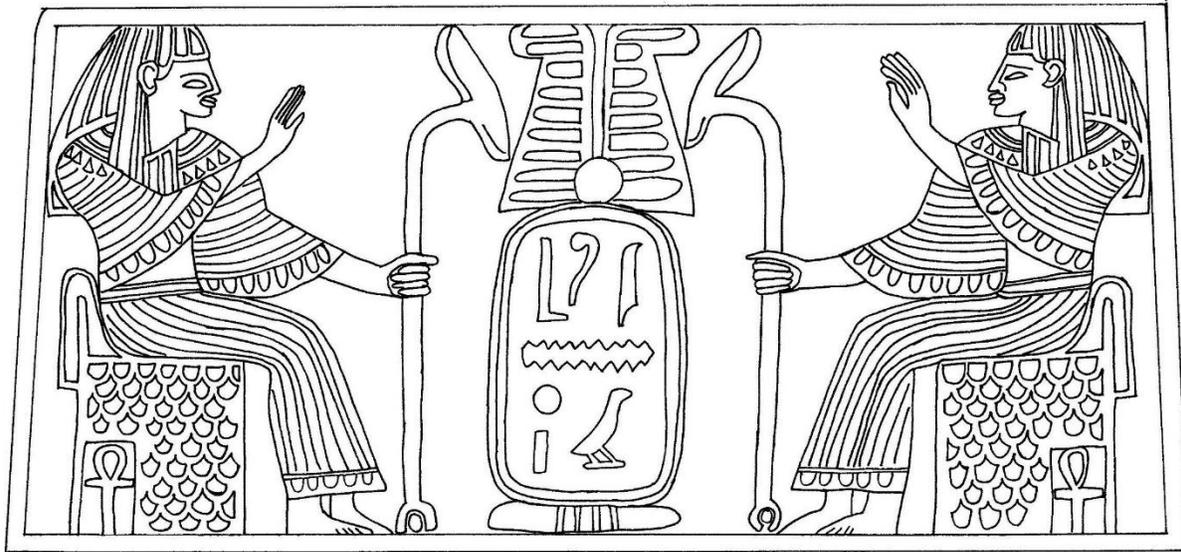
²⁹⁷ For our rendering of the syntax, with *km' š* introducing a protasis clause and *wšm' ql* as the apodosis, cf. Stanislav Segert, *A Grammar of Phoenician and Punic* (München: C. H. Beck, 1976), 219; John Gibson, *Textbook of Syrian Semitic Inscriptions*, vol. 3 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), 98. Other interpreters render part or all of the sequence *km' š qr' t...wšm' ...wp' l* as dependent on what precedes: see *KAI* 2:12, 14 (“demgemäß wie ich...gerufen hatte; sie aber erhörte...und shuf”); Gibson, *Textbook*, vol. 3, 95 (“when I called...and she heard...and did”). In either case, these three clauses most likely relate the prior event that occasioned Yahawwimilk's construction of monuments.

Byblos specifically as a manifestation of his being a “righteous king,”²⁹⁸ while the Lady of Byblos is shown in the act of giving a decree, promising in oath to bless Yahawwimilk (*tbrk b 'lt gbl 'yt yhwmlk*) and to give him life and prolong his days and years (*wthww wt 'rk ymw wšntw*), thus granting him favor (*wttn lw...hn*). (The match between scene and inscription here is especially striking, since the king expresses the wish that the granting of favor be “in the sight of the gods and in the sight of the people of this land,” which is exactly what the depiction of the scene on this monument accomplishes.) A general similarity to *נָסַח ' יָד (+adv)_{oath}* “lift up the hand (+adv)_{oath}” and its synonyms may be discerned, since the gesture to which these phrases refer is the only gesture in the Hebrew Bible that is performed both by Yahweh toward a mortal and vice versa, and there may be a sense of reciprocity in some cases. Abraham, for example, performs the gesture toward Yahweh in Genesis 14:22-23, thereby performing an act of righteousness (promising not to withhold the spoils from Sodom), while Yahweh mentions having performed the gesture toward Abraham and the other patriarchs to give them the promised land, which was a reward for their righteousness.²⁹⁹

Two of the ivories from Nimrud (BM 118120 and BM 118164 + 123855) show a pair of seated figures flanking and facing inward toward a cartouche. The hieroglyphic inscriptions within these cartouches may help to shed some light on the Palm Out gesture performed by the seated figures, yet it must be admitted that the inscriptions in both cases are somewhat enigmatic. These pieces, with the cartouches, are shown in figures 22-23.

²⁹⁸ The Phoenician word *šdq* “righteous” in this case might have the nuance of “loyal in conduct toward the deity,” which is found in cognate West Semitic languages, especially Hebrew; see BDB, 843; Helmer Ringgren in *TDOT*, 12:242-43, 258.

²⁹⁹ Cf. Genesis 15:1-6 (following closely after the scene in Genesis 14:22-23); Exodus 6:8.



Figures 22-23. BM 118120 (top) and BM 118164 + 123855 (bottom).
 Drawn by the author after Herrmann and Laidlaw, IN VI, pls. 22, C. Portions of left figure in
 BM 118120 reconstructed. Reconstructed hieroglyphs in BM 118164 + 123855 indicated by
 dotted lines, following Kitchen in IN VI, 162.

Kenneth Kitchen has recently studied and proposed new readings for these two
 inscriptions in IN VI.³⁰⁰ Kitchen reads the inscription in the cartouche of BM 118120 as *šw bn r*^c
 “Shu, son of Re,” a reference to an Egyptian god. This interpretation assumes that (1) the reed

³⁰⁰ Kenneth Kitchen, in Herrmann and Laidlaw, IN VI, 161-62.

leaf in the upper right portion is a mistaken writing of a feather standing for šw “Shu,”³⁰¹ (2) the quail chick in the lower right portion is a mistaken writing of a pintail duck and functions here as a determinative of the word for “son,”³⁰² and (3) the Phoenician word for “son,” *bn*, is transliterated here instead of using the native Egyptian word *s3*. Prior to this interpretation by Kitchen, the inscription was generally understood to give the name of an obscure Egyptian king of the 14th dynasty, *wbn-rʿ*. As Kitchen points out, this interpretation is even more problematic, since it does not explain the initial reed leaf, attributes an unrealistic degree of historical knowledge to the creator of the piece, and does not accord with what is generally found in cartouches on Phoenician ivories.³⁰³ If Kitchen’s analysis is correct, then the divine name in the cartouche could be that of the seated figure, as Kitchen suggests (assuming that the piece shows two symmetrical views of a single deity). It is also possible that the cartouche, standing for the deity himself, is actually the target of the gesture. The two flanking figures could then be understood as priests or as a king (in two symmetrical views).

Kitchen restores and reads the inscription on BM 118164 + 123855 as [*dd-mdw i*]n <deity>: *di=i <n=k ...>* “[Words spoken] by <deity>: ‘I hereby give <you ...>.’”³⁰⁴ This would be a highly abbreviated version of a formula that is very commonly spoken by gods to others (especially kings) in Egyptian art; in the Egyptian instances of the formula, what is given is typically either “life, prosperity, and health” or “life, stability, and dominion.” If this is meant to represent what is spoken by the seated figures flanking the cartouche, then this would definitely suggest that the seated figures are deities (or two symmetrical views of the same deity). It would

³⁰¹ Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar*, 474, no. H6.

³⁰² Cf. Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar*, 471, no. G38.

³⁰³ Kitchen, in IN VI, 161-62.

³⁰⁴ Kitchen, in IN VI, 162.

also suggest that the Palm Out gesture is associated in Phoenician art with ritual utterances in which one performatively gives something to another.

The ivory IM NN (9) also includes a cartouche between two flanking figures. However, it is more difficult to make sense of the hieroglyphs in this cartouche, and the piece is not as well studied as the two previously-discussed ivories from the British Museum. Mallowan, in an early publication of the ivory, reports a reading by I. E. S. Edwards as *wtrnrw*; a more accurate reading would be *r^c wtn r.w.*³⁰⁵ An interpretation of this, admittedly tenuous but along the lines of the Semitic-Egyptian hybrid interpretations that have been proposed for other inscriptions of this type, could be something like “Re is the one who gives utterances.”³⁰⁶ In any case, because the interpretation is far from certain at the current state of research, this inscription cannot shed much light on the role of the Palm Out gesture.

Although inscriptions connected to the Palm Out gesture are very rare in Northwest Semitic art (the examples discussed above being the only ones known at present), the symbols that occur above and below this gesture in glyptic art are relatively frequent and may serve as a kind of abbreviated inscription. The most frequent of these symbols is the *ankh* sign, which occurs twenty-seven times. According to Elizabeth Douglas van Buren, the *ankh* sign on cylinder seals “is usually employed as a ‘filling motive.’”³⁰⁷ Accordingly, it is possible that the *ankh* sign on the seals in our corpus is merely a space-filler in some cases. However, one must bear in mind the performative nature of the medium on which the sign occurs. This symbol (like the other symbols referred to above) occurs as an independent motif only in glyptic art; elsewhere, it may

³⁰⁵ Mallowan, *Nimrud and Its Remains*, 2:546-47 (no. 478). Edwards apparently sees an extra *r* that is not at all visible in the photograph (nor is there room for the *r*), and he does not account for the sun disk to the right of the quail chick.

³⁰⁶ The *w* at the beginning of *wtn* would be problematic, since the first radical of the Phoenician verb meaning “give” is /y/ rather than /w/.

³⁰⁷ Elizabeth Douglas van Buren, *Symbols of the Gods in Mesopotamian Art* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1945), 108-10. Van Buren includes Syrian-style seals as well as purely Mesopotamian seals in her study.

appear as an object held in the hand or as part of another object (such as a decoration on a throne), but never as an independent symbol floating in the field. One can ask why this use of the symbol would be restricted to glyptic art and lacking in other media if the only reason for using it is to fill empty space. The fact that seals are intensely performative in function suggests the possibility that the *ankh* (together with many of the other symbols which van Buren discusses, including the *djed* pillar) has a function relating to the official and performative purpose of the seal. In addition, the *ankh* sign in particular is consistently used with certain gestures (Palm Out and Palm In), so it does seem that this sign has some inherent relationship to these gestures.

One possible interpretation of the *ankh* sign in this context is that it marks the gesture as one of granting life to the seal owner (*ꜥnh* in Egyptian means “life”). This would accord with the idea that Palm Out is a gesture of blessing. It would work in cases in which a deity performs the gesture toward a mortal; however, it does not work as well in cases of the opposite scenario, since it would be unexpected for a mortal to grant life to a deity. Table 26 gives the data for the occurrence of the *ankh* sign with the Palm Out gesture, focusing on the relationship between the figures in the scene. The asterisk (*) marks an agent of the Palm Out gesture, the dagger (†) marks the presence of the *ankh* sign near the agent’s gesture, and the “less than” (<) and “greater than” (>) signs mark the directionality of figures in the scene.

Table 26. Scenarios for Palm Out with *ankh* Sign

Type of seal	Museum number	Scenario
cylinder	Aleppo M. 996	*†deity > < *mortal
“	Ashmolean 1921.1188	*†mortal > < *†mortal
“	BM 131487	*†deity > mortal > < deity
“	Damascus 2725	< animals < *†mortal
“	Damascus 3016	deity > < deity < *†mortal
“	Louvre A 906	*†mortal > *†mortal >
“	NBC 7680	*†mortal > *†mortal > < deity
“	NCBS 707	*†mortal > < deity
“	Newell 317	*†deity > mortal > < mortal
“	Newell 319	deity > < *†mortal
“	UCL 11616	*†deity > < mortal < *mortal
“	PLU (72)	deity > < *deity < *†mortal
“	PLU (73)	*†mortal > < deity
“	PLU (74)	*†mortal > < mortal
“	PLU (77)	mortal > < *†mortal
“	PLU (78)	*deity > < mortal < *†deity
scarab	Haifa IAA 86-152	*†mortal >
stamp seal	BM 48499	*†mortal >
“	BM 103278	*†deity > < mortal
“	BM 130667 (underside)	*†mortal(?) >
“	IAA 60-65	< *†mortal(?)
“	IAA 69.20.661	*†mortal(?) >
“	IAA 73-43	*†deity >
“	PBN de Luynes 223	*†mortal(?) >
“	PLU (83)	*†deity > < deity

Note: In Ashmolean 1921.1188, a single *ankh* sign is centered between the two confronted agents.

It should be noted that it is not always possible to ascertain whether a figure is a mortal or a deity; for example, the nude female figure to the left on Louvre A 906 may be a goddess, a slave, or a

woman in some other role. Nevertheless, there are six examples in which it is reasonably certain that a mortal is performing the Palm Out gesture to a deity and the *ankh* sign occurs with the gesture: Damascus 3016, NBC 7680, NCBS 707, Newell 319, PLU (72), and PLU (73).

While these examples do not support the idea that the agent is bestowing a blessing of life on the target, they do support the connection with $n\acute{o}š\acute{o}ʿ y\acute{o}d (+adv)_{oath}$ “lift up the hand (+adv)_{oath}” and its synonyms. Aside from its use in blessing formulae, the word for “life” in both Northwest Semitic and Egyptian languages is of prominent occurrence in oath formulae. The expression “by the life of X” frequently occurs as an “authenticating element” in Northwest Semitic oaths spoken by both mortals and deities, as does the lifting of the hand.³⁰⁸ Both of these authenticating elements—the expression “by my life” and an explicit reference to the lifting of the hand—occur together in an oath spoken by Yahweh in Deuteronomy 32:40-41. Similar formulae also occur in ancient Egyptian.³⁰⁹ Indeed, the word *ḥnh* “life” in ancient Egyptian, starting in the 18th dynasty, developed extended meanings as a noun “oath” and a verb “to swear.”³¹⁰ Although some of the seals using this symbol in our corpus predate the 18th dynasty, this semantic development is indicative of the close association between “life” and oath-taking in Egyptian language and culture, which would likely have been known to people in the southern Levant.

The interpretation of the *ankh* sign in Levantine glyptic art from the perspective of performative legal acts, rather than the perspective of blessing, also accords with the nature of glyptic art itself. As we have mentioned, the *ankh* sign is associated with the Palm Out gesture only on seals, and understanding both the gesture and the *ankh* sign as authenticating elements is

³⁰⁸ Blane Conklin, *Oath Formulas in Biblical Hebrew* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 13-17, 24-30.

³⁰⁹ For the oath formula *ḥnh n=i* “as (DN) lives for me,” see Faulkner, 43. For the gesture of “lifting the hand to heaven” (*βi ḥ r pt*) in the context of oath-taking, see Brigitte Dominicus, *Gesten und Gebärden in Darstellungen des Alten und Mittleren Reiches* (Heidelberg: Heidelberger Orientverlag, 1993), 95.

³¹⁰ Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar*, §218; Faulkner, 44.

appropriate in view of the fact that the primary function of the medium is authentication. In the case of a stamp seal showing the seal owner performing the Palm Out gesture accompanied by the *ankh* sign, the transmission of the image by means of stamping it on the document would amount to a declaration that the seal owner hereby authenticates the transaction with uplifted hand and “by his life.” The performative stamping of the seal image would be coterminous with the performative act of authentication as embodied in the image. If a deity is pictured performing the gesture, then it is the deity’s act of authentication that would be simultaneously transmitted and performed.

Other symbols that occur in association with the Palm Out gesture in glyptic art include the *djed* column, the fish, the scorpion, the sun disk, and the uraeus. Given the lesser frequency of these symbols in comparison with the *ankh* sign, it is more difficult to ascertain how they function as part of the context in which the gesture occurs. It may be mentioned, however, that they do not necessarily conflict with the performative legal interpretation which we have proposed for the *ankh* sign. Perhaps these, too, function in some way as authenticators of performative acts. In any case, they do not tend to support an interpretation of the gesture as one of blessing. Blessing somebody with a scorpion, for example, would seem very unusual. It is true that the *djed* column frequently occurs together with the *ankh* sign in Egyptian blessing formulae uttered by deities; however, like the *ankh* sign, the agent with whose gesture the *djed* sign occurs on Northwest Semitic seals may be a mortal addressing a deity (as in the cylinder seal Newell 320).

The Palm Out gesture occurs very frequently in Egyptian art, and examples are often inscribed with a caption that relates in some way to the gesture. The caption may either provide speech that accompanies the gesture or describe the overall action that the gesture helps to

accomplish. Many examples occur in Old and Middle Kingdom tomb reliefs, above depictions of superiors shouting orders to workers while performing the Palm Out gesture; the words they shout are quoted in the inscriptions. Brigitte Dominicus describes the gesture in this context as one of “Ruf oder Anweisung.”³¹¹ A Middle Kingdom relief shows the god Amun presenting the hieroglyphs for “all life and dominion” with his left hand to a cartouche containing the name of king Senwosret, while his right hand is raised in Palm Out; the inscription describes the action: *imn nb ns.wt t3.wy di=f nḥ dd w3s nb n s-n-wsrt* “Amun, lord of the thrones of the two lands, as he gives all life, stability, and dominion to Senwosret.”³¹² Two Ptolemaic-period stelae from the Museo Egizio in Turin provide examples of both types of inscriptions accompanying the Palm Out gesture. Both stelae show a practically identical scene of the goddesses Isis and Nephthys performing the Palm Out gesture behind the god Osiris. In one, the caption in front of Isis reads, *ḥ.wy(=i) ḥ3=k* “my arms are behind you” (an idiom that clearly connotes protection).³¹³ In the other, the caption in front of Nephthys reads, *dw3 ntr pn* “praising this god” (the same inscription occurs above a man who faces Osiris and performs the Palms Out gesture).³¹⁴ A temple relief, also from the Ptolemaic period, shows a man performing the Palm Out gesture with his right hand while presenting a figure of Maat to the god Amun-Re with his left hand; the inscription in front of him reads, in part, *di(=i) n=k m3t ḥr drt=i i3b(.t) rmn=i n imn(.t) ḥr ḥw.t=s* “I give you Maat on my left hand, while my right arm protects her.”³¹⁵ Unlike the literary contexts in which *n3s3' ycd (+adv)_{oath}* “lift up the hand (+adv)_{oath}” and its synonyms occur, no Egyptian examples

³¹¹ Dominicus, *Gesten und Gebärden*, 77, and cf. 107-29.

³¹² *ANEP*, 186, 316 (no. 551).

³¹³ Turin 3610, from author’s photograph. For the preposition “behind” connoting protection, see Wilkinson, *Symbol and Magic*, 63-64.

³¹⁴ Turin 1573, from author’s photograph.

³¹⁵ Richard A. Parker and Leonard H. Lesko, “The Khonsu Cosmogony,” in *Pyramid Studies and Other Essays Presented to I. E. S. Edwards*, ed. John Baines, T. G. H. James, Anthony Leahy, and A. F. Shore (London: The Egypt Exploration Society, 1988), 171, pl. 34; see also Emily Teeter, *The Presentation of Maat: Ritual and Legitimacy in Ancient Egypt* (SAOC 57; Chicago: Oriental Institute, 1997), 22.

of Palm Out, to our knowledge, mention oath-taking. However, on a more general level, we can see a similarity between these inscribed examples of Palm Out and the literary phrases, namely that the gesture accompanies performative action involving speech.

4.3.7.3. Connections to Mythological Events from Textual Sources

Of the objects in our corpus that show the Palm Out gesture, only the seated 'Ilu stela from Ugarit (Aleppo 4622) has attracted substantial attempts to link the scene with an episode from mythological texts. Marvin Pope has proposed that the scene on the stela represents the goddess Athiratu entreating 'Ilu as described in the Ba'lu cycle (*KTU* 1.4 iv 40-57). According to Pope, the standing figure on the left is the goddess Athiratu and not the king of Ugarit as had previously been argued, the object in 'Ilu's hand is a cup, and the gesture of his other hand is one of blessing.³¹⁶ The identification of the object in 'Ilu's hand as a cup runs contrary to previous interpreters, who described this object as an incense bowl (see the discussion of this stela above).

A slightly different idea has been brought forward by Jared J. Jackson and Harold H. P. Dressler, who connect this stela with texts describing 'Ilu taking a cup in his hand and pronouncing a blessing in the epics of Kirta (*KTU* 1.15 ii 16-20) and Aqhatu (*KTU* 1.17 i 34-36). According to Jackson and Dressler, rather than actually portraying the scenes from these texts, the stela represents a similar kind of event: 'Ilu bestowing a blessing on the king of Ugarit. As in Pope's proposal, the object in 'Ilu's right hand is interpreted as a cup, and the Palm Out gesture is understood as one of blessing. Jackson and Dressler give three arguments for the interpretation of the object as a cup: (1) the object appears to be one piece rather than two (a bowl and a flame);

³¹⁶ Marvin H. Pope, "The Scene on the Drinking Mug from Ugarit," in *Near Eastern Studies in Honor of William Foxwell Albright*, ed. Hans Goedicke (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1971), 404-5. *KTU* 1.4 iv 40-57 does not mention a cup in 'Ilu's hand, yet the cup would provide a link to the scene on the drinking mug that is the focus of Pope's article.

(2) it would be “awkward and dangerous” to hold a bowl with burning incense in a cupped hand; and (3) it would not be reasonable for a deity to offer incense to a human or lesser god.³¹⁷

Although it may be tempting to see a connection between the seated 'Ilu stela and these texts, the proposals mentioned above are flawed and must ultimately be rejected. First, the object in 'Ilu's extended hand is most likely an incense bowl and not a cup. The identification as a cup does not explain the triangular projection in the middle, while the identification as an incense bowl readily explains it as a flame. Schaeffer, in his early publication of this stela, compared depictions of incense bowls in Egyptian art, in which the flame is depicted in similar fashion.³¹⁸ A closer comparison may be found in the Northwest Semitic stamp seal IAA 73-216, which shows an incense bowl on a stand that looks virtually identical to the object in 'Ilu's hand on the stela. Further, the stamp seal PBN de Clercq 2504 shows a scene that is very similar to that on the seated 'Ilu stela, with a seated deity facing a standing attendant, and here the object in the seated deity's hand is most likely a brazier.³¹⁹ Second, depictions of incense offerings in Egyptian art do show people offering incense with the brazier cupped in the hand, although handled censers are also used.³²⁰ “Awkward and dangerous” or not, the ancients apparently did exactly this. Third, contrary to what Jackson and Dressler assume, even if the object in 'Ilu's outstretched hand is an incense bowl, it does not follow that what is being depicted is the offering of incense to the standing figure. While it is true that this combination of gestures is usually associated with the presentation of an offering by a standing figure (and there are

³¹⁷ Jared J. Jackson and Harold H. P. Dressler, “El and the Cup of Blessing,” *JAOS* 95/1 (1975): 100.

³¹⁸ Schaeffer, “Huitième campagne,” 131.

³¹⁹ Avigad and Sass (*Corpus*, 273) describe the object as a “flower,” which seems to us an unlikely identification (see the discussion of this object above). Interestingly, Schaeffer, in his early study of the seated god stela from Ugarit, also suggested in passing that the object in 'Ilu's hand may be a flower: see Schaeffer, “Huitième campagne,” 130. In any case, the object in the seated deity's hand on PBN de Clercq 2504 is certainly not a cup.

³²⁰ For examples with the brazier cupped in the hand, see *ANEP*, 105 (no. 320); Carl Richard Lepsius, *Denkmäler aus Aegypten und Aethiopien* (Genève: Éditions de Belles-Lettres, 1972), vol. 6, pl. 167; the latter is cited by Schaeffer, “Huitième campagne,” 131. On the handled “armlike censer,” with many examples, see Henry G. Fischer, “Varia Aegyptiaca,” *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 2 (1963): 28-34.

Egyptian examples of deities as well as mortals doing this³²¹), the same combination performed by a seated figure in Northwest Semitic art may have a different meaning. For example, what is depicted could be the making of a covenant between the king and the god, and the incense could serve a symbolic function in the ritual (it may be noteworthy that the word for “incense” in Egyptian, *sntr*, also means “make divine, sanctify”³²²).

Ultimately, there are not enough concrete points of similarity between Aleppo 4622 and the Ugaritic mythological texts to justify drawing a meaningful connection between them. Despite the arguments of Jackson and Dressler, it is unlikely that the stela shows ʾIlu giving a blessing while holding a cup as described in the Kirta and Aqhatu epics. This does not rule out the idea that the stela portrays the giving of a blessing, yet it leaves open the possibility that some other performative act is depicted.

4.3.7.4. Target

One of the most frequently attested types of scenes in which Palm Out occurs is that of a standing mortal figure facing a seated deity. In this type of scene, the Palm Out gesture may be performed by the seated deity toward the standing mortal, the standing mortal toward the deity, or both. Instances of this type of scene are found on stelae, cylinder seals, scarabs, and stamp seals. In the case of the seated deity in Palm Out on carved ivories, as we have mentioned, it is possible that a standing attendant was implied as the target of the gesture, and the standing attendant may even have been represented on coordinated pieces. Similarly, seated deity figurines may have been placed in contexts in which they would face human subjects, although it

³²¹ See *ANEP*, 186, 316 (no. 551), described in section 4.3.7.2 above.

³²² *WÄS*, 4:180 (“göttlich machen, heiligen”); Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar*, 576 (“make divine”); Faulkner, 234 (“cense, consecrate”). This word comes from a causative stem related to the word *ntr* “god.”

is impossible to know whether these subjects would typically be in a standing posture.³²³ In addition to these examples in which the deity is seated, there are scenes in which a standing deity performs the Palm Out gesture toward a mortal or vice versa.³²⁴ All of these examples generally accord with the contexts in which *nʿšw* ' *yʿd* (+*adv*)_{oath} “lift up the hand (+*adv*)_{oath}” and its synonyms occur. In the majority of cases, the gesture described by these phrases is performed by deity toward a mortal, and there is at least one case (Genesis 14:22-23) in which the mortal performs the gesture toward the deity.

There are also many cases in which the Palm Out gesture is exchanged between two mortals. The “Covenant Stela” from Ugarit (Aleppo 4818), for example, shows two confronted figures simultaneously performing Palm Out with a table between them. Numerous cylinder and stamp seals also show confronted figures in Palm Out, often with an altar between the figures and sometimes with divine symbols above the scene (see category 9 in table 22 and the corresponding row in table 23 above). In addition, there are many examples in which only one of a confronted pair of mortals performs the Palm Out gesture, especially on cylinder seals, such as the one shown in figure 16 above. All of these examples may be interpreted as depicting a formal act of covenant-making or mutual oath-taking; this would follow the prevailing interpretation of

³²³ While prostration is the most common posture of a human before a deity in the Hebrew Bible, standing in the deity’s presence is also mentioned, both in references to ritual prayer and in the figurative sense of serving or attending upon the deity. See D. R. Ap-Thomas, “Notes on Some Terms Relating to Prayer,” *VT* 6 (1956): 225-28; Gruber, *Aspects of Nonverbal Communication*, 90-123, 145-51. In Ugaritic literature, prostration is mentioned once in connection with approaching a deity, but most references to rituals performed before a deity do not mention a posture (Gruber, *Aspects of Nonverbal Communication*, 151-56). Depictions of non-Egyptians approaching the Pharaoh in Egyptian art show them assuming progressively lower postures as they get nearer to the Pharaoh: first standing, then kneeling, then finally prostrating themselves (*ANEP*, 15-17). This might suggest that some Levantine scenes of a standing figure before the seated deity are abbreviated, showing the worshipper in an outer location without showing the intervening space. However, it could also be that certain rituals allowed or required the practitioner to be in a standing posture even when immediately before the deity.

³²⁴ For a standing deity performing Palm Out toward a mortal, see the cylinder seals Aleppo M. 4528, Ashmolean 1952.129, De Clercq 389, Newell 317, UCL 11616, PLU (65), PLU (76), PLU (78); and the bowl Calabria NN. For a mortal performing the gesture toward a standing deity, see the cylinder seals Aleppo 4765, Antakya 3206 (1), Antakya 7318 (4), Antakya 7876 (1), Antakya 7900 (3), Antakya 8009, Ashmolean 1920.24, BM 130652, Louvre AO 22361, NCBS 707, Newell 320, Newell 322, Newell 325, PLU (69), PLU (72), PLU (73).

the “Covenant Stela” from Ugarit, and it also fits well with the cylinder seals showing confronted mortals flanking an altar.³²⁵ These examples, then, would accord with *nššw’ ycd (+adv)_{oath}* “lift up the hand (+adv)_{oath}” and its synonyms. Although most examples of these phrases describe interactions between mortals and deities (in keeping with the religious nature of the Hebrew Bible), Job 31:21-22 provides one exception, in which the basic phrase *heni’p ycd* is used to describe an oath gesture performed in the mundane context of a legal proceeding at a gate. Other passages describe lifted-hand oath gestures exchanged between humans but involving God as a third party, comparable to the seals in which divine symbols hover above the scene (Genesis 14:22-23; Ezra 10:18-19; cf. Ezekiel 17:18-19).³²⁶ At any rate, it is reasonable to assume that the oath gesture in the Hebrew Bible was part of the nonverbal repertoire of ancient Israelites and that it was present in oaths exchanged between humans, even if the gesture is not always mentioned in textual references to oaths.

³²⁵ Ornan, Keel, and Uehlinger assume that the confronted figures in the cylinder seals are “worshippers”: Ornan, “Mesopotamian Influence,” 68, with figs. 56-65 on p. 67; Othmar Keel and Christoph Uehlinger, *Göttinnen, Götter und Gottessymbole: Neue Erkenntnisse zur Religionsgeschichte Kanaans und Israels aufgrund bislang unerschlossener ikonographischer Quellen* (Fribourg: Herder, 1995), 364-65, with figs. 311a-b on p. 367. The reason Ornan gives for this assumption is that “in their postures—their arms and palms in particular—they clearly imitate Mesopotamian worshippers.” However, after following up on the sources Ornan cites, it seems that Palm Out is not the customary gesture in the Mesopotamian examples. Instead, the gesture is typically Palm In or the extending of the index finger. Further, even if these figures do “imitate Mesopotamian worshippers,” the scene should still have had meaning within the Northwest Semitic context of the creators of these seals, and this meaning does not have to match that of scenes involving similar-looking figures in Mesopotamian culture. Whereas Ornan suggests that this scene is “probably inspired by cylinders with two figures flanking a divine motif,” the meaning of the scene is most easily apprehended from internal aspects and not from the Mesopotamian scene that allegedly inspired this one. The Levantine examples do generally include divine symbols, but the symbols are often above the figures’ heads rather than in line with their Palm Out gesture; in the internal logic of these seals, then, there is no deity to serve as the target of the gesture, although the divine symbols may preside over the scene or may stand in the role of witnesses. Since the figures face each other with the palm facing the opposite figure, the natural conclusion is that the opposite figure is the target of the gesture.

³²⁶ Genesis 14:22-23, according to one possible interpretation, describes an oath made by Abram to the king of Sodom, accompanied by a lifted-hand gesture “to Yahweh El Elyon” (see the discussion of this passage in chapter 2). In Ezra 10:18-19, human agents perform a lifted-hand gesture in a religious context without an explicit addressee, and it is possible that God’s role was understood as being like that of an aloof witness. The gesture of the king of Judah in Ezekiel 17:18-19 may be similar, perhaps performed toward the king of Babylon but involving Yahweh as witness and/or guarantor (if this describes an oath gesture and not a gesture of pledging allegiance).

4.3.7.5. Instrument

The Palm Out gesture, by its nature (having the open palm either perpendicular or downward with respect to the ground), does not include an object in the gesturing hand. (The non-gesturing hand, however, often holds a staff or scepter, especially in the case of a seated or standing deity; or it may hold an object that is being presented.) Likewise, in occurrences of *nṣṣo' ycd (+adv)_{oath}* and its synonyms, no instrument is mentioned as a part of the gesture.

4.3.7.6. Agent

Both deities and mortals are agents of the Palm Out gesture. Some major types of divine agents that are found in more than one kind of object include the seated deity (which is the most frequently-attested type in the corpus overall), the standing falcon-headed god, and the standing goddess. The examples of each of these types are given in the following list:

- | | |
|----------------------------|---|
| seated deity | <u>figurines</u> : Aleppo 4529, Beirut B 705, Beirut B 7637, Berlin NN (1), Damascus 3573, Hazor NN, IAA 69.10.128, Louvre AO 1761, Louvre AO 2049, Louvre AO 2195, Louvre AO 2770, MMA 32.18.3, Nicosia NN, OI A 18355, PLU (59), PLU (60); <u>stelae</u> : Aleppo 4622, Louvre AO 22368; <u>ivories</u> : Ashmolean 1957.224, Ashmolean AM 1962.9, BISI NN (2), IM 60526, IM 60536, IM NN (ND 6352), IM NN (7); <u>cylinder seals</u> : Antakya 10302, Ashmolean 1913.336, Damascus 2841, Damascus 2924, Damascus 3000, PLU (66); <u>scarabs</u> : LIA EV.62/1; <u>stamp seals</u> : PBN de Clercq 2504, BM 103278, IAA 73-43, PBN de Clercq 2756, Rockefeller 32.762; <u>pendants</u> : PLU (85), PLU (86). Total: 39. |
| standing goddess | <u>figurines</u> : Berlin NN (2), Damascus 3574, Louvre AO 2701, Louvre AO 10848; <u>stelae</u> : Damascus 6356, Haifa K-65; <u>ivories</u> : BM 130853, IM 65466, IM 74825, IM NN (8); <u>cylinder seals</u> : Ashmolean 1920.52, Newell 319, Newell 320, PBN 485, PML NN (2), PLU (65), PLU (76); <u>bowls</u> : Nicosia NN; <u>pendant</u> : Rockefeller J. 3810. Total: 19. |
| standing falcon-headed god | <u>ivories</u> : BM 132946, BM 2011.6001.478, BM 2011.6001.619, BM 2011.6001.685, BM 2011.6001.686, Brussels 0.2648, IM 65347; <u>cylinder seals</u> : Aleppo 4765, Aleppo M. 996, BM 131487, De Clercq 389, Newell 318; <u>scarabs</u> : Amman 10087, IAA 96-1956, IAA 96-1958, Rockefeller 47.578. Total: 16. |

These categories might be added to or further divided according to various criteria. The seated deity, for example, may be male or female (male examples predominate among the figurines, while the pendants include only female examples). The standing goddess may be further differentiated by the kind of headdress worn (the standing female with horned sun disk headdress is similar to depictions of the Egyptian goddess Hathor, and it has been suggested that this deity in the Levantine examples is Astarte³²⁷). Other types of standing gods, such as the winged god with human head, might be added. Nevertheless, this list is sufficient to show that deities of various sorts are very commonly agents of the Palm Out gesture.

Types of mortal agents that are found in more than one type of object include the standing male with a rounded headdress and a wrapped robe, whose non-gesturing hand is tucked into his robe; and the male in kneeling position, who wears a crown in some examples:

standing male with NGH tucked in robe	<u>stelae</u> : Aleppo 4818, Louvre AO 15775; <u>cylinder seals</u> : Aleppo M. 996, Antakya 3206 (1), Antakya 7876 (1), Antakya 7900 (2), Antakya 7900 (3), Ashmolean 1952.129, Damascus 3016, Louvre A 906, NBC 7680, PLU (72), PLU (73); <u>plaque</u> : Hazor NN. Total: 14.
male in kneeling position	<u>ivories</u> : BM 2011.6001.444, IM NN (10), MMA NN (1); <u>cylinder seals</u> : Antakya 7992, Ashmolean 1921.1188, Louvre AO 14814, NBC 10952; <u>stamp seals</u> : EIM 1263, IAA 91-2408; <u>bowls</u> : RMVG 61574. Total: 10.

As discussed above, the man with his non-gesturing hand tucked into his robe, who wears a rounded cap, has usually been identified as a ruler. The male in kneeling position also seems to have royal status, particularly in those examples in which he wears an Egyptian-style Double Crown, as he does on the two stamp seals.

³²⁷ See, for example, Contenau, *Manuel*, 2:1068.

There is also one major type of agent that appears to be mixed, including some examples in which the agent is divine and some in which he is mortal, namely the standing male with a scepter or staff:

standing male with scepter or staff	<u>ivories</u> : BM 2011.6001.477, IM 65182, IM 65876, IM NN (4), MMA 61.197.12; <u>stamp seals</u> : Ashmolean 1914.57, BLM 1099, BM 48488, BM 48499, BM 102974, BM 130667 (underside), BM 130667 (back), Florence NN, Haifa H-2036, IAA 60-65, IAA 69.20.661, IAA 71.46.84, Louvre AO 6006, Moussaieff NN, PBN de Luynes 218, PBN de Luynes 223, PBN de Luynes 224, PBN Seyrig 1972.1317.124, PBN Seyrig 1972.1317.139, Rosen NN, PLU (82). Total: 26.
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This last type is especially frequent on stamp seals. Bordreuil and Gubel have attempted to differentiate personages belonging to this type on the basis of their attributes and the names of the seal owners inscribed on the seals. According to Gubel, the figures with crowns are kings, and those without crowns are high officials. Bordreuil and Gubel assert that the personages depicted on the seals are the seal owners, and their names, inscribed on the seals, can sometimes be equated with names of kings mentioned in Assyrian annals.³²⁸ However, others, including Lemaire and Sass, have called attention to the dubious nature of these conclusions, given the widespread nature of some of the names, the lack of explicit royal or official titles on the great majority of the seals, and the uncertain relationship between the personages depicted on the seals and the inscribed names.³²⁹ Sass suggests that these seals could, in some cases, depict the seal owner's sovereign in the act of "blessing" the subordinate seal owner.³³⁰ It could also be pointed out that kings whose identification is certain in Northwest Semitic art sometimes appear without

³²⁸ Gubel, "Iconography of Inscribed Phoenician Glyptic," 118-21.

³²⁹ André Lemaire, "Les critères non-iconographiques de la classification des sceaux nord-ouest sémitiques inscrits," in Sass and Uehlinger, *Studies in the Iconography*, 15-16; Benjamin Sass, "The Pre-Exilic Hebrew Seals: Iconism vs. Aniconism," in Sass and Uehlinger, *Studies in the Iconography*, 229-30.

³³⁰ Sass, "Pre-Exilic Hebrew Seals," 229-30. Sass here assumes that the Palm Out gesture is one of blessing; however, this should not be taken for granted, as we attempt to show in this section.

any headdress, and that some examples of this type definitely depict a deity. It appears, then, that the lone figure in Palm Out may be a deity, a king, or a lower-ranking mortal; there are probable examples of each, and there are also examples in which the identity of the figure is difficult or impossible to discern. As with Fist Up, it is also possible that the convergence of divine and mortal identities is precisely the point. For example, a seal bearing the name of an official may contain an image of the king in divine form, so that the use of the seal implies both that the seal owner hereby acts as a delegate of the king and that the king hereby acts as a vicar of the deity.

The Palm Out gesture may be performed by both male and female agents. Seated deities, standing deities, and standing mortals performing this gesture may be female as well as male. Some types of objects in our corpus seem to exclude one type (such as the seated goddess among the figurines and the seated god among the pendants), but we have avoided drawing conclusions from this, since it may simply reflect the accidents of preservation. In any case, the overall corpus is basically unbiased as to the agent's gender.

Agents of the Palm Out gesture are attested in a range of postures, including sitting, standing, kneeling on one knee, and sprawled out on the belly. As far as the overall corpus is concerned, the first three postures do not appear to be sharply differentiated by the divine/mortal status or gender of the agent, except that deities are rarely found in the kneeling posture (an example is Harpokrates kneeling upon a lotus while performing the Palm Out gesture, PBN Chandon de Briailles 156). However, the fourth and lowest posture is limited to the scene of a man being dominated by a sphinx, which is found on carved ivories. We treat this as a separate contextual type that is not necessarily to be linked with the same phrases as other examples of Palm Out (see the discussion in section 4.3.7.1 above).

As discussed in chapter 3, while the phrase *נָסָה יָד (+adv)_{oath}* itself occurs exclusively with a divine and male Agent (Yahweh), synonymous full gesture phrases—namely *נָטַח יָד לַP_{obl}* “put forth the hand to P_{obl},” *הִרִימָה יָד ’ֵל-T* “raise the hand toward T,” and *הִנִּיחָה יָד ’ֵל-T_{ref}* “elevate the hand concerning T_{ref}”—have mortal Agents. These include a group of priests (Ezra 10:18-19, where the full gesture phrase is *נָטַח יָד לַP_{obl}*), Abraham (Genesis 14:22-23, where the phrase is *הִרִימָה יָד ’ֵל-T*), and Job (Job 31:21-22, where the phrase is *הִנִּיחָה יָד ’ֵל-T_{ref}*). We have not given much weight to the distribution of divine and mortal Agents for these phrases, since the majority of instances of *נָסָה יָד (+adv)_{oath}* occur within a single narrow contextual type (that of the giving of the promised land to Israel) and since it is reasonable to assume that oath gestures (like spoken oath formulae) are not differentiated by the divine or mortal status of the one who uses them. At any rate, the overall set of synonymous phrases describing the raising of the hand in an oath context includes both divine and mortal Agents, like the overall corpus of examples of Palm Out. The fact that examples of these phrases do not have female Agents may reflect three factors: (1) the theological fact that the Israelite God, Yahweh, is male; (2) the general tendency of the text to focus on the deeds of male protagonists; and (3) accidents of preservation. It does not necessarily mean that women in Levantine society could not perform the lifted-hand oath gesture (which would rule out the connection with Palm Out). The Hebrew Bible does describe women taking oaths, as in Ruth 1:17, in which the Moabitess Ruth swears an oath to her mother-in-law.

Unfortunately, Northwest Semitic textual sources provide no information on the posture(s) that would coincide with oath gestures. We do not know whether the Agent in a given textual

reference performs the gesture while sitting, standing, or kneeling.³³¹ It could be that the posture was standard and so did not need to be mentioned, but it could also be that the posture was freely variable or dependent on circumstances that did not directly bear on the oath itself. Thus the various postures that coincide with the Palm Out gesture in art (sitting, standing, and kneeling on one knee) neither confirm nor exclude the proposed link between Palm Out and the synonymous set of phrases including *nʿšw' yʿd (+adv)**oath*.

There is a small group of examples in which a human agent's non-gesturing hand (that is, the hand that is not performing the Palm Out gesture) is extended forward, palm upward with the hand in cupping shape, holding an object as if to give it as an offering. This group includes the Yahawwimilk stela (Louvre AO 22368, figure 11) and the Nimrud ivories BISI NN (1), IM 65335, and IM NN (9). The agent is in a standing posture in the first three of these examples, but the pair of flanking figures in IM NN (9) are in a kneeling position. The combination of gestures shown in this small group of examples is very commonly found in Egyptian depictions of a standing or kneeling person presenting an offering before a deity. There are also examples in Egyptian art that show Northwest Semites (as well as other non-Egyptians) presenting offerings in this pose before the Pharaoh; these examples apparently show overlap between Egyptian and Northwest Semitic gestures. Inscriptions accompanying such scenes (both those showing Egyptians making offerings to a deity and those showing non-Egyptian making offerings to the Pharaoh) make it clear that the combination of gestures is understood as the giving of an offering: verbs associated with the gesture include *in* "bring," *rdi* "give," and *hnk* "present, offer."³³² In light of this comparison with inscribed Egyptian examples, in the small group of Northwest

³³¹ 2 Kings 23:3 contains two separate references to a standing posture for making a covenant. However, this is not conclusive with respect to the raised-hand oath gesture, since a hand gesture is not mentioned in this verse, and there is no indication that other covenants or oaths were also performed standing.

³³² Teeter, *Presentation of Maat*, 49-51; *ANEP*, 15 (no. 45).

Semitic examples in which Palm Out is combined with the presentation of an offering in the other hand, the Palm Out gesture may be connected with the phrase *nʕtan yʕd ləT* “put forth the hand to T,” which occurs in 2 Chronicles 30:8 in the context of approaching Yahweh in his temple. Although the presentation of an offering is not specifically mentioned in 2 Chronicles 30:8, the fact that an offering would be expected is evident from such passages as Exodus 23:15; 34:20; and Deuteronomy 16:16, which state that one should not appear before Yahweh empty-handed (*lo ʿ yerʕ ʿe^h ʿet-pəne^y YHWH re^yqom*).

Another example of Palm Out in combination with another gesture is the cylinder seal Aleppo 4765, which shows a smiting god figure in Palm Out. As discussed in the section on Setting above, this suggests that the gesture can have a hostile function and is more than just a “gesture of greeting or blessing.” We have linked this example, together with other examples of Palm Out in an apparently hostile setting, with instances of *nʕśʕ ʿ yʕd (+adv)_{oath}* in which the content of the oath is hostile.

Finally, as a special category of the Palm Out gesture, we might consider those instances in which the agent of the gesture is doubled in relation to a focal motif, either as identical figures flanking the motif or as a row of figures facing it. These instances include seven ivories, three cylinder seals, two scarab seals, and one metal bowl:

Ivories:

- BM 118141 + 118154 (standing figures flanking central motif, now lost)
- BM 132917 (originally standing or kneeling figures flanking scarab)
- BM 2011.6001.444 (kneeling figures flanking scarab)
- IM 65466 (standing goddesses flanking Harpokrates)
- IM 74825 (standing goddesses flanking Harpokrates)
- IM NN (10) (row of kneeling figures holding up sphinx, central motif missing)
- MMA NN (1) (row of kneeling figures holding up sphinx, central motif missing)

Cylinder Seals:

- Damascus 2898 (standing figures flanking sacred tree)

NBC 7530 (row of standing figures facing standing god)
NBC 10952 (row of standing figures facing confronted long-necked beasts)

Scarabs:

Amman 10087 (standing figures flanking scarab)
Rockefeller I. 10223 (standing figures flanking scarab)

Bowl:

RMVG 61574 (kneeling figures flanking scarab)

The fact that the agent in all of these instances shows characteristics of subordinate status (such as a kneeling posture, being trodden under a sphinx, or being peripheral to a central motif in the composition) warrants treating these as a distinct category, separate from other examples of Palm Out in which the gesture is not so starkly linked to a hierarchical arrangement.³³³ Given that the subordinate status of the agent relative to the target seems to be of the essence in this smaller set of examples, it may be appropriate to compare the gesture of pledging allegiance mentioned in literature, *nʿtan yʿd (+adv)_{pledge}* “put forth the hand (+adv)_{pledge}.”

The ivories BM 118120 and BM 118164 + 123855, which depict seated figures flanking a central motif, are special ambiguous cases. In general, the seated god in Palm Out is more contextually analogous to examples of oath-taking in texts than to examples of pledging allegiance. However, it would be very odd for a seated god to be doubled and flanking a central motif, which raises the possibility that the seated figure is not a god but a king or priest pledging allegiance to a central motif that represents the god. In both ivories, the cartouche inscription is of uncertain significance and ultimately cannot resolve the ambiguity of the composition. Given the symmetrical arrangement of these ivories, which closely resembles others that clearly belong

³³³ The combination of Palm Out with the presentation of an offering is also characteristically tied to a hierarchical arrangement, but the giver and receiver of the offering can be mutually symmetrical in the composition (as in the Yahawwimilk stela, figure 11), and the one who gives the offering is never trodden upon.

to the “pledge of allegiance” category, we may tentatively place these ivories in the “pledge of allegiance” category despite the ambiguous status of the seated figures.

4.3.7.7. Details of the Gesture

In all examples of Palm Out in Levantine art, the hand is raised and extended forward so that the palm faces outward and/or downward. The precise angle of the forearm ranges from virtually parallel with the ground (the extreme low form of the gesture) to virtually parallel with the trunk of the agent’s body (the extreme high form of the gesture). These high and low forms do not have a clearly-defined distribution and would seem to be linked to the physical constraints of the composition rather than to social factors. For example, the extreme high form is used on a cylinder seal on which the tall back of a throne stands immediately in front of the agent (Amman NN). Nevertheless, the extreme low and high forms are very rare; in the vast majority of examples, the forearm is at approximately 45 degrees, the forearm and upper arm together forming a “V” shape. This is the same for both divine and human agents in all postures. In agreement with this, the cluster of phrases used for the oath gesture in literature includes verbs that describe both the aspect of raising (*nōśō* “lift up,” *heriʾm* “raise,” and *heniʾp* “elevate”) and the aspect of putting forth (*nōtan* “put forth”). The other phrases that we have adduced for the less-common contextual types happen to describe only the aspect of putting forth (*nōtan*).

Without exception, in figurines portraying the Palm Out gesture, the gesture is performed with the right hand. This seems to indicate that the right hand is the preferred one for this gesture. The evidence from two-dimensional art (stelae, ivories, glyptic art, etc.) is more equivocal, at least at first sight, as examples of the gesture performed with the right hand and with the left hand are about equally divided. However, in the great majority of cases in which the left hand

performs the gesture, one could argue that the left hand is chosen for compositional reasons, either to preserve symmetry between facing figures or for maximal representation of important gestures and body parts. Further, we may mention again the interesting case of the seated 'Ilu stela, on which the left hand seems to perform the gesture (most likely for the purpose of maximal representation in the composition), but the hands are reversed, as if to remind the viewer that it is the right hand that should be performing the Palm Out gesture and the left hand that should be holding the incense bowl. In the final analysis, the evidence from both the figurines and the two-dimensional examples argues that the use of the right hand in the Palm Out gesture was strongly preferred. The phrases used in texts to describe the one-handed oath gesture always employ the generic word *yad* “hand” without specifying the right or left. However, Isaiah 62:8 refers to Yahweh having sworn “by his right hand” (*bi'y mi'no"*). The authenticating element of this oath would include the phrase “by my right hand,” the raising of the right hand, or both. The Psalmist in Psalm 144:8, 11 also describes false swearers as having a “false right hand” (*yami'n šoqer*), perhaps alluding to an oath gesture in which the right hand is used. Comparative evidence also favors the notion that the right hand would be the preferred one in the ancient Northwest Semitic oath gesture.³³⁴ As for the gesture of pledging allegiance and the gesture of approaching the temple, there is no textual evidence regarding handedness, so a connection with Palm Out is neither confirmed nor contradicted.

The Palm Out gesture in Levantine art has a directional component in that the palm of the hand faces the target. This is compatible with prepositional phrases used to introduce the Target in the linguistic tokens of the oath gesture: *nšw' yad laT_{add}* “lift up the hand to T_{add}” (Exodus 20:5-6, etc.), *nšw' yad 'el-T_{dir}* “lift up the hand to T_{dir}” (Deuteronomy 32:40), and *heri'm yad 'el-*

³³⁴ Betty J. Bäuml and Franz H. Bäuml, *Dictionary of Worldwide Gestures*, second edition (Lanham: The Scarecrow Press, 1997), 305-7.

T “raise the hand toward *T*” (Genesis 14:22-23). As for phrases describing the gesture of pledging allegiance, we have interpreted the preposition in *nʕtan yʕd taḥat T* “put forth the hand in submission to *T*” (1 Chronicles 29:23-24) as referring to the ideology of the gesture and not to its physical directionality (figuratively and not physically “under” the king), and there is also *nʕtan yʕd (adv)T* “put forth the hand to *T*” (Lamentations 5:6). Finally, the directional nature of the Palm Out gesture is also compatible with the phrase for the gesture used to approach God in the temple: *nʕtan yʕd ləT* “put forth the hand to *T*” (2 Chronicles 30:8).

The details of the Palm Out gesture may therefore be said to agree precisely with gesture phrases describing the lifting of one hand in the contexts of oath-taking, pledging allegiance, approaching the temple with an offering, and surrender. Table 27 outlines the contextual types in which Palm Out occurs, the gesture phrases that correspond to each contextual type, and the pertinent iconographic examples.

Table 27. Categories for Palm Out Corresponding to Gesture Phrases

Contextual Type	Corresponding Phrase(s)	Examples in Levantine Art
1. Divine Oath or Decree	<i>nšw' yəd (+adv)_{oath}</i>	<u>figurines</u> : all except Damascus 3573; <u>stelae</u> : Aleppo 4622, Damascus 6356, Haifa K-65, Louvre AO 22368; <u>ivories</u> : Ashmolean 1957.224, Ashmolean AM 1962.9, BISI NN (2), BM 130853, BM 132946, BM 2011.6001.478, BM 2011.6001.619, BM 2011.6001.685-686, Brussels 0.2648, IM 60526, IM 60536, IM 65347, IM 65466, IM 74825, IM NN (ND 6352), IM NN (7)-(8); <u>cylinder seals</u> : Aleppo 4765, Aleppo M. 996, Antakya 10302, Ashmolean 1913.336, Ashmolean 1920.52, BM 131487, Damascus 2841, Damascus 2924, Damascus 3000, De Clercq 389, Newell 318-320, PBN 485, PML NN (2), PLU (65)-(66), PLU (76); <u>scarabs</u> : Amman 10087, IAA 96-1956, IAA 96-1958, LIA EV.62/1, Rockefeller 47.578; <u>stamp seals</u> : PBN de Clercq 2504, BM 103278, IAA 73-43, PBN de Clercq 2756, Rockefeller 32.762; <u>bowls</u> : Nicosia NN. Total: 71.
1a. Divine Oath or Decree (Hostile)	“ “ “ “	<u>figurine</u> : Damascus 3573; <u>cylinder seal</u> : Aleppo 4765; <u>pendants</u> : all. Total: 6.
2. Human Oath	a. <i>nštan yəd ləP_{obl}</i> b. <i>heri^ym yəd 'el-T</i> c. <i>heni^yp yəd 'al-T_{ref}</i>	<u>stelae</u> : Aleppo 4818, Louvre AO 15775; <u>cylinder seals</u> : Aleppo M. 996, Antakya 3206 (1), Antakya 7876 (1), Antakya 7900 (2)-(3), Antakya 7992, Ashmolean 1921.1188, Ashmolean 1952.129, Damascus 3016, Louvre A 906, Louvre AO 14814, NBC 7680, PLU (61)-(62), PLU (67), PLU (72)-(73); <u>stamp seals</u> : EIM 1263, IAA 33.3150, IAA 91-2408, PLU (84); <u>plaque</u> : Hazor NN. Total: 24.
3. Pledge of Allegiance	<i>nštan yəd (+adv)_{pledge}</i>	<u>ivories</u> : BM 118141 + 118154, BM 132917, BM 2011.6001.444, IM 65466, IM 74825, IM NN (10), MMA NN (1); <u>cylinder seals</u> : Damascus 2898, NBC 7530, NBC 10952; <u>scarabs</u> : Amman 10087, Rockefeller I. 10223; <u>bowls</u> : RMVG 61574. Total: 13.

Table 27, continued

Contextual Type	Corresponding Phrase(s)	Examples in Levantine Art
4. Human Presenting Offering	<i>nōtan yōd lāT</i>	<u>stela</u> : Louvre AO 22368; <u>ivories</u> : BISI NN (1), IM 65335, IM NN (9). Total: 4.
5. Surrender	<i>nōtan yōd</i> (Jer 50:15)	<u>ivories</u> : Birmingham 451'65g, BM 2011.6001.365, BISI NN (3), IM 62667, IM 65371, IM 65393, IM NN (ND 13084), MFA 65.918, ROM 959.91.6. Total: 9.

The breakdown of Palm Out according to these categories has at least four advantages over the traditional analysis of Palm Out as a gesture of greeting, blessing, or adoration; namely: (1) it accounts for the various contexts in which the gesture occurs, including hostile contexts and use by divine and human agents; (2) it allows matches with phrases that occur in texts, which phrases happen to occur with the same relative frequency as the iconographic examples, so that the iconographic sources are in harmony with the textual evidence; (3) it explains the gesture on the “Covenant Stela” from Ugarit as an oath-taking or covenant-making gesture, which accords with the overall scene on the stela; and (4) it coincides with the purposes of some of the media on which the gesture appears, including the performative use of glyptic art and the apotropaic use of pendants. In the remainder of the discussion in this chapter and in chapter 5, we will proceed on the supposition that this breakdown, along with the resulting synthesis of language and iconography, is correct.

4.4. Palm In

A gesture of raising the hand forward to about shoulder level or a little higher, the elbow approximately to the square and the open palm facing inward toward the agent’s face, is somewhat less abundantly attested in Levantine iconography than Fist Up and Palm Out. This

same palm-inward gesture is extremely common in Mesopotamian art, but it is less frequent in the Levant and occurs in different contexts. Within the Levantine sphere, the palm-inward gesture occurs virtually exclusively on glyptic art of the Middle and Late Bronze Ages. As we shall see, examples may be found on Iron Age stamp seals and stone relief work bearing Aramaic inscriptions, but these works properly belong to the Mesopotamian and not the Levantine sphere. As with Palm Out, descriptions of the palm-inward gesture tend to resort to function terms like “gesture of greeting or blessing.”³³⁵ Again, we prefer to use a term that is descriptive of the gesture’s form, so we refer to this gesture as “Palm In.”

4.4.1. Palm In on Cylinder Seals and Scarabs

As with Palm Out, the majority of provenanced Syrian-style cylinder seals showing Palm In come from excavations at Alalakh and Ugarit. In addition, large collections of unprovenanced seals showing this gesture are found at Yale University and at the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford. The clear majority of these seals are dated by archaeological context or on stylistic grounds to the Middle Bronze Age, but there are also several from the Late Bronze Age.

One example from Late Bronze Age Ugarit (Aleppo 3732) is shown in figure 24.³³⁶

³³⁵ For example, see Keel, *Corpus III*, 110 (no. 192): “der ‘vordere’ ist im Gruss- bzw. Segensgestus gewinkelt nach vorn erhoben.” By “nach vorn,” Keel apparently has reference to the angle of the arm and not to the direction of the palm; the hand drawing on p. 111 makes it clear that the gesture is interpreted (correctly) as Palm In. For discussion of this scarab seal, see below.

³³⁶ Amiet, *SC*, 94, 106 (no. 230).

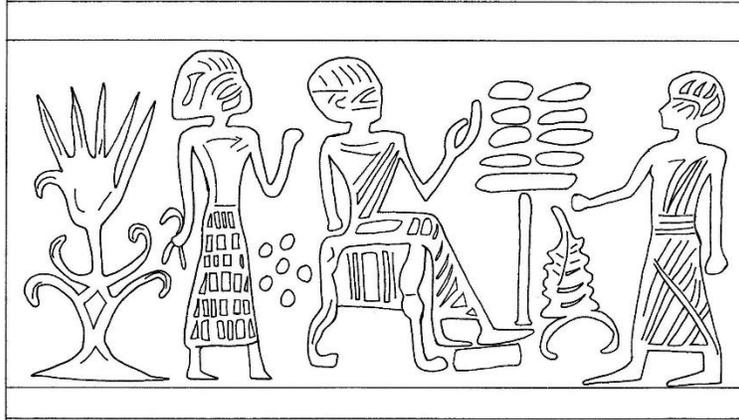


Figure 24. Cylinder seal from Ugarit showing seated figure in Palm In.
 Drawn by the author after Amiet, *SC*, 106.

This seal shows a male with a rounded headdress or skull cap, seated, facing right, his left hand in Palm In, and his right hand not clearly visible. Behind him is a male or female with a curved headdress or hairdo, standing, facing right, his/her left hand raised in an uncertain gesture with a rosette (formed from globules) below, and his/her right hand to the side and holding an uncertain small object (possibly a small vessel). Before the seated figure is a table bearing two stacks of bread loaves. Opposite the table, facing the seated figure, is a male with a skullcap or no headdress, standing, his right hand extended in an uncertain gesture with a scorpion below, and his left arm to the side.

Another example, this one from the Yale Babylonian Collection (Newell 333), is shown in figure 25. This seal is unprovenanced but is dated on stylistic grounds to the Middle Bronze Age.³³⁷

³³⁷ Buchanan, *YBC*, 426-27 (no. 1235).

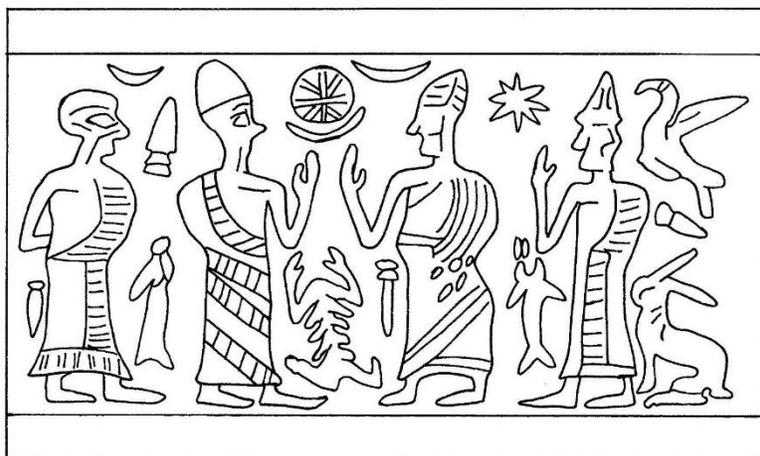


Figure 25. Cylinder seal showing three standing figures in Palm In.
 Drawn by the author after Buchanan, *YBC*, 427.

The scene on this seal includes three standing figures in Palm In. The first is a male with a tall and rounded headdress, standing, facing right, his left hand in Palm In, and his right hand tucked into his robe. Facing him is a male with a shorter rounded headdress, standing, his right hand in Palm In, and his left hand tucked into robe. Behind this second figure is a male with a pointed headdress, standing, facing left, his right hand in Palm In with a star above, and his left hand tucked into his robe. A cross-hatched sun disk in a crescent hovers between the first and second figures and in line with their raised hands. Behind the first figure is yet a fourth standing male, facing right, both hands tucked into his robe. Various other symbols (a scorpion, a vessel, a fish, a bird, and a hare) are arranged in the field between the figures.

The remainder of Syrian-style cylinder seals showing the Palm In gesture are summarized in the following list.

- Aleppo M. 998 LB Alalakh / male with horned headdress, standing, facing left, **R in Palm In**, L held close to torso; behind him are two standing females, one nude and in frontal view and the other facing left; facing first figure is male with short and rounded headdress, standing, holding spear / Hammade, 104-5 (no. 197).

- Aleppo M. 4528 P, Syria / male or female with no headdress, standing, facing right, **L in Palm In**, R tucked into robe; facing him/her are two standing figures: male or female with no headdress, R in Palm Out, L to the side; and winged male with tall rounded headdress, R in Palm Out, L to the side; between right-facing figure and two left-facing figures is small male or female, standing, facing right, L extended with palm downward, R to the side; also between them and in line with first figure's raised hand is star / Hammade, 80-82 (no. 152).
- Aleppo M. 6350 P, MB Syria / male with horned headdress, facing viewer with body turned to viewer's left, **R in Palm In**, L held close to torso; behind him is male with top of head obscured, facing left, **L in Palm In**, R not visible but likely held close to torso; facing these two figures is male with flat-topped headdress / Hammade, 78-79 (no. 145).
- Antakya 3026 (= 7900, 7960-61; BM 131474A) MB Alalakh / male or female with headdress missing, standing, facing left, **R in Palm In**, L not visible; before him/her is stylized tree; on other side of tree, facing first figure, is male or female with head missing, standing, R in uncertain gesture (forearm and hand missing) / Collon, *SITA*, 47-48 (no. 81).
- Antakya 3206 (2) (= 7327, 7960-61) MB Alalakh / male with tall and rounded headdress, standing, facing right, **R in Palm In** with bird (partially missing) above, L tucked into robe; facing him is female with horned headdress, standing, R forward and holding cup with falcon wearing Double Crown below, L held close to body; behind her is male or female with no discernible headdress, standing, facing left, **R in Palm In** with *ankh* sign directly above (touching fingers), head on pole in front, and vulture below / Collon, *SITA*, 76-77 (no. 140); Keel, "Jaspis-Skarabäen-Gruppe," 238 (no. 44).
- Antakya 3280 (= 7900, 7960-61) MB Alalakh / male with tall and rounded headdress, standing, facing right, **R in Palm In**, L tucked into robe; facing him is shorter female with horned square headdress, standing, **R in Palm In**, L held close to torso; behind her is much larger female (larger than first figure) with identical headdress, standing, facing left, R holding circle from which emanate lines with globules at their ends, L held close to torso; behind first figure is group of four standing or striding boys in uncertain one-handed gesture (Palm In or Palm Out), winged sun disk and bird above them, column of four *ankh* signs before them (separating them from first figure) / Collon, *SITA*, 13-14 (no. 12).
- Antakya 7318 (1) MB Alalakh / male with tall and rounded headdress, standing, facing right, **R in Palm In** with bird above, L apparently tucked into robe; before him is column of globules, probably standing for a tree trunk; on the other side of this column of globules, and facing first figure, is male with rounded headdress, standing, R forward and grasping bow, L upraised and grasping axe; behind this second figure are traces of another left-facing figure / Collon, *SITA*, 25-26 (no. 31).

- Antakya 7322
(2) (= 7900) MB Alalakh / male with no headdress, standing, facing right, **L in Palm In**, R held close to torso; at least three other faces of this octagonal seal show human figures, but very little can be discerned about their characteristics and gestures / Collon, *SITA*, 86 (no. 156).
- Antakya 7322
(3) (= 7761,
7900, 7960-61) MB Alalakh / male with top of head missing, standing, facing right, **R in Palm In**, L forward and making fist; behind him is female with top of head missing, standing, facing right, in Palms In; facing them is female with horned square headdress, standing, R in Fist Out, L held close to torso / Collon, *SITA*, 7 (no. 4).
- Antakya 7327 (= 7876, 7900,
7960-61, 9140) MB Alalakh / male with tall headdress, standing, facing right, **R in Palm In**, L forward and making fist; behind him is female with horned headdress, standing, facing right, in Palms Sideways; facing them is female with horned square headdress, standing, R forward and holding cup, L held close to torso; above the two facing figures, and in line with first figure's gesture, is vulture or falcon holding Shen sign that almost touches first figure's hand / Collon, *SITA*, 6 (no. 3).
- Antakya 7761
(4) MB Alalakh / female with horned square headdress, standing, facing left, **R in Palm In**, L not visible; facing her is male with top of head missing, standing, in Fist Up; between and at the feet of the two figures is couchant calf / Collon, *SITA*, 28 (no. 36).
- Antakya 7761
(5) MB Alalakh / male with tall and rounded headdress, standing, facing right, **R in Palm In** with winged sun disk above, L forward and making fist; facing him is unknown (probably female) figure, mostly missing, with one hand forward and holding pitcher from which streams of water flow / Collon, *SITA*, 21-22 (no. 25).
- Antakya 7761
(6) (= 7960-61;
9140) MB Alalakh / male with tall rounded headdress, standing, facing right, **R in Palm In**, L forward and making fist; behind him is female with horned headdress and flounced robe, standing, facing right, in Palms In; facing them is female with horned square headdress, standing, R forward and holding *ankh* sign (her hand shape is identical to Palm In), L held close to torso / Collon, *SITA*, 8 (no. 5).
- Antakya 7876
(2) MB Alalakh / male with most of headdress missing, standing, facing left, **L in Palm In**, R tucked into robe; behind him are two scorpions, one above, and one below, separated by guilloche border / Collon, *SITA*, 55 (no. 99).
- Antakya 7900
(3) (= 7960-61;
BM 131648) MB Alalakh / female with top of head missing but wearing flounced robe, standing, facing right, **R in Palm In**, L held close to torso; behind her are two very fragmentary figures, probably standing and facing right; before her is female with horned and round-topped headdress, standing, facing right, L extended with hand partially missing, R tucked into robe; facing them is male with tall round-topped headdress, standing, R in Palm Out, L tucked into robe / Collon, *SITA*, 40 (no. 63).

- Antakya 7900 (4) MB Alalakh / male with tall headdress, standing, facing left, **R in Palm In** with eight-pointed star above, L mostly missing; facing him is female with horned square headdress, standing, L extended in uncertain gesture, R mostly missing / Collon, *SITA*, 17 (no. 17).
- Antakya 7900 (5) MB Alalakh / female with most of head missing, standing, facing right, **L in Palm In**, R missing; before her is male with many features missing, facing right / Collon, *SITA*, 19-20 (no. 21).
- Antakya 7900 (6) MB Alalakh / male with mostly missing headdress, standing, facing right, **R in Palm In**, L tucked into robe; before him are small nude female, remnants of wing and pointed object below, and kneeling figure facing left / Collon, *SITA*, 34-35 (no. 50).
- Antakya 7900 (7) MB Alalakh / male or female with top of head missing, standing, facing left, **R in Palm In**, L held close to torso or tucked into robe; behind him/her is male or female with top of head missing, standing, facing left, in Palms In / Collon, *SITA*, 37-38 (no. 58).
- Antakya 7900 (8) MB Alalakh / male or female with head missing, standing, facing right, **R in Palm In** with *ankh* sign below, L tucked into robe; before him/her is seated figure (probably male), facing right, with head missing / Collon, *SITA*, 48 (no. 82).
- Antakya 7900 (9) MB Alalakh / male with no visible headdress, standing, facing right, **R in Palm In**, L mostly beneath robe; facing him is procession of four boys with kilts, each with hands clasped in front of torso / Collon, *SITA*, 50 (no. 88).
- Antakya 7960-61 (7) MB Alalakh / female with top of head missing, standing, facing right, **L in Palm In**, R not visible; before her is male with most features missing, standing or striding, facing right, in Fist Up / Collon, *SITA*, 29 (no. 39).
- Antakya 7960-61 (8) MB Alalakh / male with head missing, standing, facing right, **R in Palm In**, L not visible; facing him is male or female with head missing, standing, facing left, R in uncertain gesture (perhaps Fist Out), L close to torso or tucked into robe; behind him/her is male or female with head missing, standing, facing left, **R in Palm In**, L close to torso or tucked into robe; skirts of two other figures, otherwise missing, can be seen to the right / Collon, *SITA*, 39-40 (no. 62).
- Antakya 7960-61 (9) MB Alalakh / nude female with top of head missing, standing, viewed frontally but with face turned to the right, **L in Palm In** with star above and fish below, R held close to torso / Collon, *SITA*, 53 (no. 94).
- Antakya 7960-61 (10) MB Alalakh / male with tall and rounded headdress, standing, facing right, **R in Palm In**, L forward and making fist; facing him is female with horned square headdress, standing, R forward and holding cup; behind her is male with no headdress, standing, facing left, **R in Palm In** with *ankh* signs above and below, L not visible (possibly tucked into robe); above whole scene is winged sun disk / Collon, *SITA*, 75-76 (no. 138).

- Antakya 7960-61 (11) MB Alalakh / two pairs of confronted figures; first pair: female with no discernible headdress, standing, facing left, **R in Palm In**, L to the side; facing her is male with modified *atef* crown, standing, L forward and grasping *was* scepter; above him is Hathor head with arms spread out beneath, palms upward; surrounding him, including in front of and below first figure's Palm In gesture, are *ankh* signs; second pair: male with tall and rounded headdress, standing, facing left, **R in Palm In**, L missing; facing him is female with horned square headdress, standing, facing right, R holding *ankh* sign; second *ankh* sign above this one; above both pairs of figures is winged sun disk / Collon, *SITA*, 74-75 (no. 136).
- Antakya 7960-61 (12) MB Alalakh / male with short rounded headdress (decorated with uncertain figure, possibly quadruped or uraeus), standing, facing right, **R in Palm In**, L forward and grasping pole of standard on which sun disk in crescent is mounted; facing him, on other side of standard, is another fragmentary figure who also grasps the pole; behind first figure is female with horned headdress, standing, facing right, in Palms In / Collon, *SITA*, 81 (no. 148).
- Antakya 8880 (1) Alalakh / male with tall round-topped headdress, standing, facing right, **R in Palm In**, L forward and grasping spear; behind him is female with horned headdress, standing, facing right, in Palms In; facing them is female with horned round-topped headdress, standing, R forward and holding cup, L mostly missing / Collon, *SITA*, 11 (no. 10).
- Ashmolean 1891.729 P, Syria / male with round-topped headdress, standing, facing right, **R in Palm In**, L tucked into robe; facing him is female with horned headdress, standing, R forward and holding cup, L held close to torso / Buchanan, *AM* 1, 171, 230, pl. 55 (no. 872).
- Ashmolean 1913.75 P, Syria / nude female with no headdress, standing, body in frontal view but face turned to viewer's right, **L in Palm In**, R only partially extant; around her is canopy; she is flanked by two inward-facing standing figures: on left is male with no discernible headdress, **L in Palm In** with lentoid below, R tucked into robe; on right is male with no discernible headdress, **R in Palm In** with lentoid below, L tucked into robe; behind the inward-facing figures is (from top to bottom) star, vertical stroke, and fish / Buchanan, *AM* 1, 172-73, pl. 55 (no. 881).
- Ashmolean 1913.141 P, Syria / male with no headdress, standing, facing left, **R in Palm In** with forearm vertical, L extended forward and downward with palm upward/outward; behind him is male or female with no headdress, standing, facing left, **R in Palm In** with forearm vertical, L held close to torso; facing them is winged male with conical headdress, standing, L forward and grasping pair of spears, R held close to torso / Buchanan, *AM* 1, 172, pl. 55 (no. 877).

- Ashmolean
1913.165 P, Syria / double-faced male with horned headdress, standing or striding, body facing right, **L in Palm In**, R grasping hand of semi-nude female with no headdress, standing or striding, facing right; fish in field beneath the clasped hands; facing these two figures is male with horned headdress, seated, R in Palm Sideways, L not visible, water flowing from shoulder / Buchanan, *AM* 1, 170, pl. 55 (no. 864).
- Ashmolean
1913.553 P, Syria / male or female with no headdress, standing, facing right, **L in Palm In** with forearm vertical and *ankh* sign below; before him/her is winged nude female figure, standing, body shown frontally but face turned to right; facing them is male or female with no headdress, standing, facing left, R forward and holding uncertain object / Buchanan, *AM* 1, 172, pl. 55 (no. 880).
- Ashmolean
1921.1190 P, Syria / male or female with top of head obscured, standing, facing left, **R in Palm In**, L tucked into robe, water flowing from shoulders; behind him/her is female with horned sun disk headdress, standing, facing left, R forward and grasping curved rod, L to the side and grasping lotus bud scepter; facing these two figures is male with short and rounded headdress, standing, R raised before face in uncertain gesture, L tucked into robe; between the two facing sets of figures is kid (above) and altar (below) / Buchanan, *AM* 1, 170, pl. 55 (no. 867).
- Ashmolean
1927.2112 P, Syria / female with plant-like headdress, standing, facing right, **L in Palm In**, R to the side; behind her is male with no headdress, standing, facing right, L tucked into robe, R to the side; before her is small nude female, standing, facing right; facing these three figures is male with tall and round-topped headdress, standing, R forward in uncertain gesture, L to the side; behind him is female with nondescript headdress, standing, facing left, R forward and holding tall jug, ball staff below; between confronted female and male figures, and roughly in line with first figure's hand gesture, is spread-winged bird; between first and second figures are (from top to bottom) eight-pointed star, gazelle head, and tree or grain stalk / Buchanan, *AM* 1, 170-71, pl. 55 (no. 870).
- Ashmolean NN P, Syria / male or female with no discernible headdress, standing, facing right, **L in Palm In**, R to the side; behind him/her is second standing figure, badly faded, probably also facing right; facing them is rampant griffin / Buchanan, *AM* 1, 172, pl. 56 (no. 901).
- Damascus 2917 LB Ugarit / male or female with no discernible headdress, seated, facing right, **L in Palm In**, R not clearly visible; behind him is palm tree; before him is table upon which kneels small human figure, above whom is couchant caprid, and two bread loaves may also be indicated above kneeling figure's face; across from table, facing seated figure, is male with no discernible headdress, striding, R lowered, L raised high / Amiet, *SC*, 91, 102 (no. 207).

- NBC 7810 MB Syria / male or female with no discernible headdress, standing, facing right, **L in Palm In** with bird below, R not visible; facing him/her is male with no discernible headdress, seated, R forward and holding cup; between these two figures and in line with first figure's gesture is winged sun disk; behind seated figure is female with no discernible headdress, standing, facing left, R forward and holding palm branch, L not visible / Buchanan, *YBC*, 420-21 (no. 1210).
- NBC 7811 MB Syria / female with no discernible headdress, standing, facing right, **L in Palm In** with star above and in line with gesture; before her is male with short and rounded headdress, standing, facing right, R to the side and grasping sickle sword, L tucked into robe; before this second figure is virtually identical mirror-image figure: male with short and rounded headdress, standing, facing left, L to the side and grasping sickle sword, R tucked into robe / Buchanan, *YBC*, 424-25 (no. 1225).
- NBC 7814 MB Syria / male with short and rounded headdress, standing, facing right, **R in Palm In**, L not clearly discernible; before him is nude female with face turned left but body in frontal view, standing on couchant bull, bird on each side at face level; opposite first figure is male with no headdress, standing, facing left, **R in Palm In**, L lowered toward bull / Buchanan, *YBC*, 428-29 (no. 1241).
- NBC 7825 MB Syria / male with short and rounded headdress, standing, facing left, **R in Palm In**, L tucked into robe; behind him is male or female with multi-horned headdress, standing, facing left, **R in Palm In**, L tucked into tunic; facing these two figures is male with tall and rounded headdress, standing, R in Palm Sideways, L held close to torso / Buchanan, *YBC*, 426-27 (no. 1233).
- NBC 7928 Syria / male or female with no headdress, standing, facing right, **L in Palm In**, R not visible; facing him/her is male with no headdress, standing or kneeling, **R in Palm In**, L to the side; three other figures facing inward toward these two figures; between first two figures and below their hands is rectangular object; similar rectangular objects behind head of second figure and elsewhere in field / Buchanan, *YBC*, 414-15 (no. 1188).
- NBC 8316 MB Syria / male with tall and round-topped headdress, standing, facing right, **R in Palm In**, L held close to body and grasping spear or arrows, star in line with raised hand; before him is male with short and rounded headdress, standing, facing right, L in Palm Sideways, R tucked into robe; facing second figure is female with horned headdress and flounced robe, standing, in Palms Sideways; between these confronted figures are sun disk in crescent (above) and scorpion (below) / Buchanan, *YBC*, 418-19 (no. 1200).
- NBC 8929 MB Syria / male with tall and rounded headdress, seated, facing right, **L in Palm In** with sun disk in crescent directly above, hand symbol before, and eight-pointed star below, R tucked into robe; facing him is nude female, standing, facing left, hands to the side; opposite seated figure and facing him is symmetrical seated figure with **R in Palm In** / Buchanan, *YBC*, 418-19 (no. 1202).

- NBC 9368 MB Syria / male with no headdress, standing or striding, facing left, **R in Palm In**, L lowered but slightly forward with palm upward; he is part of group of three figures facing left toward winged lion-headed figure who faces right / Buchanan, *YBC*, 428-29 (no. 1244).
- NBC 10956 MB Syria / male with short and rounded headdress, standing, facing right, **R in Palm In**, L forward and grasping hare by its hind leg; behind him is female with horned headdress and flounced robe, standing, facing right, in Palms In; facing first figure is male with short and rounded headdress, standing, R forward and grasping scepter, L to the side and grasping sickle sword; behind this third figure is male with horned headdress, standing, facing left, holding vase with streams of overflowing water; between right-facing Palm In figure and first left-facing figure is unidentified symbol resembling *djed*-pillar atop crescent / Buchanan, *YBC*, 426-27 (no. 1236).
- NBC 11089 MB Syria / male with top of head obscured, standing, facing left, **R in Palm In** with *ankh* sign below, L tucked into robe; before him is male with no discernible headdress, seated, face turned toward viewer but body turned to viewer's left, R holding cup (shape of hand resembles Palm In), L close to torso; before seated figure is male with rounded headdress, standing, facing right, L in Palm Out, R to the side; winged sun disk between seated figure and right-facing figure / Buchanan, *YBC*, 420-21 (no. 1211).
- NCBS 752 Syria / two male or female figures, standing or striding, facing left, **R in Palm In**, L not visible; alternating with the two figures are a stalk of grain and two superimposed birds / Buchanan, *YBC*, 408-9 (no. 1166).
- Newell 165 MB Syria / male or female with no headdress, standing, facing left, **R in Palm In**, L held close to torso; facing him/her is male or female with no headdress, seated, L holding small jug, R held close to torso / Buchanan, *YBC*, 418-19 (no. 1198).
- Newell 300 MB Syria / male with short and rounded headdress, standing, facing right, **L in Palm In**, R mostly not visible; before him is guilloche between vertical lines; opposite guilloche and facing first figure is female with horned headdress and flounced robe, standing, facing left, in Palms In / Buchanan, *YBC*, 420-21 (no. 1216).
- Newell 319 MB Syria / male with short rounded headdress, seated on throne, facing right, **R in Palm In**, L close to body, cartouche above knees; behind him is female with sun disk in crescent on her head, standing, facing right, L in Palm Out, R down and to the side; facing seated figure is male or female with uraeus headdress, standing or striding, R in Palm Out with hand lowered so that palm is nearly parallel to ground, L down and to the side; sun disk in crescent above and between seated figure and standing figure facing him / Buchanan, *YBC*, 418-19 (no. 1204).

- Newell 330 MB Syria / male with no headdress, standing, facing right, **L in Palm In** close to face, R to the side; before him are two confronted figures, both identical in appearance and dress to first figure, in Palm Sideways with altar between them, star above altar and in line with confronted figures' raised hands / Buchanan, *YBC*, 424-25 (no. 1229).
- YBC 9695 MB Syria / female with no headdress, standing, facing left, **R in Palm In** with jug below, L to the side; facing her is shorter male or female, standing, behind whom is female with no headdress, standing, facing right, in Palm Out; sun disk in crescent at face level between the two taller figures / Buchanan, *YBC*, 422-23 (no. 1220).
- YBC 12580 MB Syria / two confronted males with no headdress, standing, **R in Palm In**, L tucked into robe / Buchanan, *YBC*, 420-21 (no. 1215).
- YBC 12779 MB Syria / male or female with no discernible headdress, standing, facing right, **L in Palm In** with eight-pointed star above and in line with gesture and *ankh* sign below, R held close to torso; before him/her are three standing males with tasseled headdresses and short kilts: first faces right, L in Palm Out with arm fully extended forward and upward, R lowered and holding dagger with blade pointed outward; second faces left, R in Palm Out with arm fully extended, L lowered and holding dagger with blade pointed outward; third faces left and is identical to second figure in pose, gesture, and dagger; behind first right-facing figure and/or last left-facing figure are (from top to bottom) sun disk in crescent, ridged pole, and *ankh* sign / Briggs W. Buchanan, "Cylinder Seals of the Yale Babylonian Collection," *The Yale University Library Gazette*, 35/1 (1960): 30 (no. 68); Buchanan, *YBC*, 426-27 (no. 1238).
- PLU (65) MB Ugarit (RS 11.025) / male with tall and round-topped headdress, standing, facing left, **L in Palm In**, R forward and grasping spear with point downward; facing him is female with horned headdress, standing, L in Palm Out, R tucked into robe; behind her is male or female with head missing, standing, facing right, L in uncertain gesture (most likely Palm Out), L tucked into robe; between the two facing figures, and in line with their gestures, is eight-petaled rosette / Amiet, *SC*, 27-28, 31 (no. 40).
- PLU (76) P, Unknown provenance / male with short and pointed headdress, standing, facing right, **L in Palm In**, R tucked into robe; facing him is female with horned sun disk headdress, standing, facing left, L in Palm Out, R forward and grasping staff / Collon, "Green Jasper," 59, 67, pl. 22 (no. 12); Keel, "Jaspis-Skarabäen-Gruppe," 215 (no. 12).
- PLU (87) LB Ugarit (RS 30.261) / male or female with conical headdress, seated, facing left, **R in Palm In**, L not clearly visible; behind him is horned animal skull; before him is table bearing bread loaves, goblet, and, atop these, bird with spread wings; opposite table is nondescript figure or object / Amiet, *SC*, 91, 102 (no. 206).

PLU (88) LB Emar / male with short and rounded headdress or skullcap, standing, facing right, **L in Palm In**, R held close to torso or tucked into robe; before him is male smiting god figure with couchant bull on leash, facing right; opposite smiting god figure is nude female with what may be horned headdress, standing, facing left, **R in Palm In**, L held close to torso; behind and between the two Palm In figures are sun disk in crescent (above) and *ankh* sign (below) / Beyer, *Sceaux*, 260 (no. F14).

In terms of the contextual aspects surrounding the gesture on these seals, the Palm In gesture is very similar to Palm Out. For example, Newell 330 shows a figure in Palm In facing to the right, toward a confronted pair that flanks an altar. This matches the scene on Newell 317, except for the gesture itself (on the latter, the right-facing figure performs the Palm Out gesture).

Targets for the Palm In gesture on these seals also match the targets attested for the Palm Out gesture. Table 28 shows the targets that are attested and the corresponding category numbers for targets of Palm Out on cylinder seals (compare table 22).

Table 28. Targets of Palm In on Cylinder Seals

Target	Examples with Palm In	= Palm Out category
confronted enthroned figure	Newell 165, NBC 7810	1
confronted standing attendant	Newell 319	2
offering table loaded with offerings	Aleppo 3732, Damascus 2917, PLU (87)	3
back of enthroned figure	Antakya 7900 (8), NBC 11089	4
smiting god	PLU (88)	5a
winged god	Ashmolean 1913.141	5b
Syrian goddess	Antakya 3206 (2), Antakya 3280, Antakya 7322 (3), Antakya 7327, Antakya 7761 (6), Antakya 7900 (4), Antakya 8880 (1), Ashmolean 1891.729, PLU (65)	5c
nude goddess	Ashmolean 1913.75, Ashmolean 1913.553, NBC 7814	5d
griffin	Ashmolean NN	7b
confronted standing human, not in Palm In	Aleppo M. 998	10

There is a disproportionate number of examples with the Syrian goddess as the target (nine to be exact). It is uncertain whether this is due to some connection between the Palm In gesture and the goddess; it may just as well be due to incidental factors (such as the personal preference of a seal-cutter or of his clientele). Also, there is only one clear example of the confronted standing human target, not as many as might be expected. In fact, there seems to be a general tendency for Palm In to be performed by a mortal toward a deity, while Palm Out is more frequently performed by a deity toward a mortal or by one mortal toward another. This is by no means a rigid rule, yet as a general tendency it may shed some light on the symbolism of the two gestures (see chapter 5). Aside from these observations, the targets of the Palm In gesture compare well

with those of Palm Out, indicating close contextual similarity between the two gestures (at least in the specific medium of Bronze Age glyptic art).

There is also similarity in the agent of the Palm In gesture compared to the Palm Out gesture. The agents of Palm In on the cylinder seals include the seated figure (Damascus 2917, Aleppo 3732, PLU [87], Newell 319, NBC 8929) and the man with the rounded headdress and with his non-gesturing hand tucked into his robe (Antakya 3206 [2]).

On five cylinder seals, the Palm In gesture is accompanied by an *ankh* sign: Antakya 7900 (8), Ashmolean 1913.553, Ashmolean NN, NBC 11089, and YBC 12779. This is yet another contextual similarity to the Palm Out gesture. It is noteworthy that other gestures, such as Fist Up, Palm Sideways, and Palms Out, are not accompanied by the *ankh* sign in this manner.

In addition to cylinder seals, there are two Hyksos scarab seals that show a figure in the Palm In gesture. Both of them were excavated from a Middle Bronze Age context at Tell el-Far'ah South. One of these is LIA EV.62/1, illustrated in figure 17 above.³³⁸ This shows a standing female (unfortunately with her head missing), facing left, her right hand in Palm In, and her left hand to the side. She faces a seated male or female who raises his/her right hand in Palm Out while grasping a rod or scepter with the left hand. Once again, we see here the contextual similarity between Palm Out and Palm In, since both gestures are attested for the standing figure who faces a seated figure (see the first category in tables 22 and 28).

The other scarab, LIA EV.3/12, shows a more unusual scene.³³⁹ This scarab is shown in figure 26.

³³⁸ Keel, *Corpus* III, 110-11 (no. 192).

³³⁹ Keel, *Corpus* III, 48-49 (no. 45).

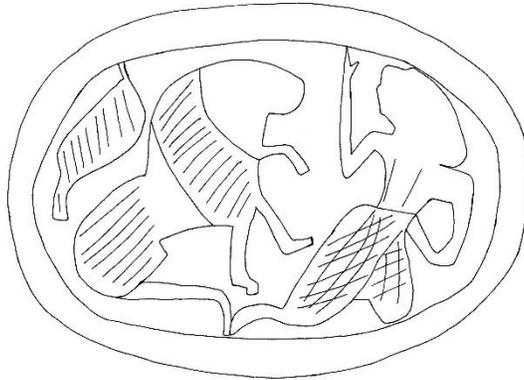


Figure 26. Scarab seal showing prostrate figure in Palm In.
Drawn by the author after Keel, *Corpus III*, 49.

The scene shows a male with no discernible headdress, kneeling, his body facing right but his head and hands turned to face left. His right hand is raised high in Palm In, while his left hand is held close to his torso. Facing him (to the viewer's left) is a lion sitting on its haunches, its mouth wide open. Keel analyzes the gesture in this context as “abwehrend” or “flehend.”³⁴⁰ Another possibility is that the gesture here is one of surrender, like the Palm Out gesture of the prostrate man being trampled by a griffin, a scene shown on Nimrud ivories (see section 4.3.7.1). The main difference in the scene on this scarab would be that the gesture is performed toward the menacing beast instead of toward an unseen entity beyond the border of the piece. In any case, it is noteworthy that the man's posture on LIA EV.3/12 is very much like that of cowering captives in Palms Out who are about to be slain by a crowned figure, which scene appears on metal bowls from the Iron Age (see section 4.6.4). From this perspective, the lion on LIA EV.3/12 could be understood as a symbolic representation of a king.

³⁴⁰ Keel, *Corpus III*, 48 (no. 45).

4.4.2. Palm In on Art Objects from the Iron Age

The Palm In gesture is very commonly attested on Iron Age stamp seals that bear West Semitic (most often Aramaic) inscriptions.³⁴¹ However, there are major differences between these stamp seals and the Levantine cylinder and scarab seals discussed above. First, in terms of style and general iconography, these stamp seals are completely within the Mesopotamian sphere. The seals typically show a mortal agent performing the gesture toward a spade and stylus (the Mesopotamian symbols for the gods Marduk and Nabu), or toward a male deity who stands upon a U-shaped crescent moon and who also performs the Palm In gesture. There is no clear continuity with the types of scenes in which Palm In was seen to occur in the Syrian and Hyksos seals, and there are no features that are exclusively indicative of Levantine iconography. Second, the Palm In gesture on these stamp seals seems to be interchangeable with a two-handed gesture, Palms In (that is, the two gestures occur in the same contexts within the repertoire of these stamp seals). The interchangeability of these two gestures is characteristic of Mesopotamian and not Levantine gesture patterns. In short, these stamp seals properly belong to the Mesopotamian and not the Levantine cultural sphere, thus they cannot be used as evidence of Levantine gestures. As we have seen in the case of some stamp seals showing the Fist Up gesture, the use of Aramaic language and script are not necessarily indicators of West Semitic cultural orientation in the latter part of the Iron Age, since Aramaic was a *lingua franca* in the Near East during this period.

Similar statements may be applied to the Bar Rakab orthostat from Iron Age Zinjirli, which shows the seated king Bar Rakab performing the Palm In gesture on the left as a scribe approaches on the right. At the top center of the scene is a sun disk on a standard, the symbol of the god Baal Harran. To the right of this symbol is an Aramaic inscription that reads *mr`y b`l hrn*,

³⁴¹ Avigad, *Corpus*, nos. 767, 778, 779, 782, 789, 795, 802, 806, 814, 816, 825, 826, 855, 856, 885, 910, 1058, 1109, 1110. As categorized by Avigad and Sass, these stamp seals are almost exclusively Aramaic, with a few Moabite and Ammonite examples. The names on the seals are sometimes West Semitic, but some are Akkadian.

“My lord (is) Baal Harran,” and to the left of the symbol is inscribed *'nh br rkb br pnm*, “I (am) Bar Rakab, son of Panammu.”³⁴² As tempting as it may be to link this scene with that of the seated figure in Palm In in Bronze Age Levantine glyptic art, the orthostat bears clear indications of Assyrian style and cultural orientation. Even the scribe’s gesture, a raised fist with the knuckles facing the king, is not typical for the Levant but is more properly Assyrian or Anatolian.

Therefore, while recognizing that the Iron Age stamp seals and the Bar Rakab orthostat are important for comparative purposes, we exclude these pieces from our main corpus. This means that the only exemplars of the Levantine version of the Palm In gesture come from the Bronze Age. This has large implications for the overall analysis of the Palm In gesture, as discussed below.

4.4.3. Context of Palm In and Synthesis

As we have seen, the Palm In gesture in Levantine sources is exclusively limited to Bronze Age glyptic art. The majority of material comes from the Middle Bronze Age; it diminishes somewhat during the Late Bronze Age, and it finally disappears by the Iron Age. When the Palm In gesture reappears in “West Semitic” glyptic art of the Assyrian and Babylonian periods, it is only as a strictly Mesopotamian motif with no apparent connection to Northwest Semitic culture. Thus there is no archaeological evidence that the Palm In gesture was part of the Northwest Semitic nonverbal repertoire during the Iron Age. (This contrasts with Palm Out, for which there is ample evidence throughout the Bronze and Iron Ages and even into

³⁴² It is not certain whether the two inscriptions are to be read as sentences or simply as noun phrases in apposition. In the former interpretation, the inscriptions contain the speech of the seated figure (although it is not clear why the king would want to identify himself and his god to the approaching scribe). In the latter interpretation, the inscriptions function as labels of the divine symbol and the seated figure respectively (although the labels are in the first person of Bar Rakab).

the Persian period; indeed, if our analysis of Palm Out is correct, it may be the forebear of the gesture used for oath-taking in the modern Middle East.)

These iconographic data render unlikely any comparison with gestures mentioned in Northwest Semitic textual sources. Unfortunately, no Bronze Age Northwest Semitic text of which the present author is aware (Ugaritic or otherwise) contains a suitable comparandum for this gesture. There is a significant chronological gap between the Bronze Age iconographic sources and the period when the Hebrew Bible was composed, which casts doubt on the propriety of an attempt to compare Palm In with biblical gesture phrases. The interpretation of the Palm In gesture must therefore rely on iconographic and comparative evidence without the benefit of a synthesis with Northwest Semitic textual sources.

Gestures resembling Palm In in Mesopotamian sources have been thoroughly studied in Assyriological circles. Connections between the Mesopotamian gesture and phrases used in Sumerian and Akkadian texts have been drawn based on abundant iconographic and textual evidence. Stephen Langdon, in a 1919 article, analyzed the Mesopotamian gesture as one of adoration, adducing evidence from cylinder seals and from some textual sources.³⁴³ Benno Landsberger later analyzed the gesture as one of greeting or blessing and linked it with the Mesopotamian verb *karābu* “bless, greet.”³⁴⁴ More recently, Christopher Frechette has provided a more nuanced analysis of the Mesopotamian material, focusing on the concept of ritual reciprocity and the connection between forms of the gesture and the relative status of the agent

³⁴³ Stephen Langdon, “Gesture in Sumerian and Babylonian Prayer: A Study in Babylonian and Assyrian Archaeology,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 1919: 531-56, unnumbered plate.

³⁴⁴ Benno Landsberger, “Das ‘Gute Wort,’” *Mitteilungen der Altorientalischen Gesellschaft* 4 (1930): 294–321.

and target. Frechette brings into dialogue many previous studies (including those of Langdon and Landsberger) and synthesizes iconographic and textual data.³⁴⁵

It is very tempting to identify Palm In in Levantine sources with the Mesopotamian version of this gesture. One could posit that Palm In was a Northwest Semitic “gesture of greeting or blessing” during the Bronze Age. This analysis is perhaps more appropriate for Palm In than for Palm Out, given the formal similarity of the former gesture to the Mesopotamian one and the fact that Palm In, unlike Palm Out, is not attested in hostile contexts. Moreover, this would fit nicely in a diachronic schema: in the Iron Age, the functions of this gesture could have been taken over by two-handed gestures of prayer and of formal blessing (see section 3.3.2 and the priestly blessing gesture in Leviticus 9:22, and compare section 4.6 below).

However, one major consideration makes this connection seem less likely. As has been demonstrated above, the Palm In gesture in Levantine iconography is virtually identical with Palm Out from a contextual standpoint. The two gestures occur in the same types of scenes. As with Palm Out, there are examples of Palm In in which an *ankh* sign occurs below the gesture and in which a mortal appears to be addressing a deity (Ashmolean 1913.553, Ashmolean NN), which argues against the idea that the combination denotes blessing the target with life. We have argued, based on a careful analysis of context, that the Palm Out gesture is to be linked with various phrases denoting performative action, such as oath-taking. This understanding of Palm Out works particularly well to explain occurrences of the gesture in the performatively-oriented medium of glyptic art, and the same may be true for the Palm In gesture (which occurs only in glyptic art). This contextual similarity between the Palm Out and Palm In gestures strongly

³⁴⁵ Christopher G. Frechette, *Mesopotamian Ritual-prayers of “Hand-lifting”* (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2012), 11-106, 229-42.

suggests that the two gestures are similar in function, which would rule out an identification with the Mesopotamian gesture (at least in the currently prevalent understanding of the latter).

There is some comparative evidence for the occurrence of Palm In in the context of oath-taking; the evidence comes not from Mesopotamia, but from Egypt. A fragment of a wall painting from the eighteenth-dynasty tomb chapel of Nebamun in West Thebes (BM 37982) shows a balding and bowed-down farmer, standing, facing right, who raises his left hand in Palm In, his right hand forward and grasping a *was* scepter. Before him is a short stela, and above him is an inscription quoting his speech: *wꜣḥ pꜣ ntr ꜥꜣ nty m tꜣ pt iw pꜣ wd mty ꜥḥꜣw pꜣy* “As the great god who is in heaven endures, this stela is in the correct position (lit. exact of position).” The farmer is thus clearly portrayed as performing the Palm In gesture while uttering an oath.³⁴⁶ We should note here that many types of speech, not just oaths, occur with Palm In in Egyptian sources.³⁴⁷ Further, this is a very rare example of an oath gesture represented in Egyptian art (the only one of which the present writer is aware), and there may have been other oath gestures in use alongside this one in ancient Egypt.³⁴⁸ Nevertheless, what may have been only an occasional conjunction of the Palm In gesture and the context of oath-taking in ancient Egypt could well have been a more consistent pattern in the Levant. This painting is shown in figure 27.³⁴⁹

³⁴⁶ Dominicus, *Gesten und Gebärden*, 95n550, categorizes the gesture in this painting as an oath gesture, which she refers to as “die Hand am Mund”; see also Keel, *Symbolism of the Biblical World*, 97, with fig. 124.

³⁴⁷ Dominicus, speaking primarily of the Old and Middle Kingdoms, describes the Egyptian Palm In gesture as a “Rede-, Ruf- oder Rezitationsgeste”; among the contexts in which it occurs are the presentation of offerings and an apotropaic utterance against a crocodile. See Dominicus, *Gesten und Gebärden*, 128 (Abb. 41), 129-30.

³⁴⁸ For instance, sections 2.2.17 and 4.3.7 above would suggest that the Egyptian phrases *ꜣi ꜥ* “lift the arm” and *ꜣi drt* “lift the hand,” when used in the context of oath-taking, refer to Palm Out.

³⁴⁹ One notes that the farmer’s hand in this painting is quite close to his face. This may be partially due to his bent posture; nevertheless, Old and Middle Kingdom examples show the hand close to the face even when the figure is not bent forward (see Dominicus, *Gesten und Gebärden*, 128, Abb. 41). Some figures in the Levantine cylinder seals likewise have the front hand raised close to the face: Antakya 7322 (2); Ashmolean 1913.141; Ashmolean 1913.553; Ashmolean 1927.2112; Newell 330; YBC 12580.



Figure 27. Tomb painting of Nebamun, showing Palm In in an oath context. Drawn by the author after author's photograph, used by kind permission of the Trustees of the British Museum.

The comparison with the Nebamun tomb painting would suggest that, despite many points of similarity with Mesopotamian iconography, the cultural significance of this gesture in the Levant was held in common not with Mesopotamia but with Egypt.³⁵⁰ This accords with the many points of similarity between gesture patterns in the Levant and in Egypt, as we have seen above and will see further below. We may posit that the gestures Palm Out and Palm In were

³⁵⁰ The situation is similar to that of European iconography as assessed by Natalie Crohn Schmitt, "The Body in Motion in the York *Adam and Eve in Eden*," in *Gesture in Medieval Drama and Art*, ed. Clifford Davidson (Kalamazoo: Western Michigan University, 2001), 159: "the gestures in the iconography...however conventional and selective, reflect English life to the extent that the gestures and depictions of movement in them would need to be explicable to English viewers."

basically interchangeable during the Bronze Age (perhaps differing in some nuance), but by the Iron Age, the two gestures had merged so that only Palm Out survived as the gesture of performative ritual action.

The scarab seal LIA EV.3/12, which shows a man in Palm In cowering before a menacing lion, accords with the general contextual similarity between Palm In and Palm Out, particularly if the scene is one of surrender (as opposed to Keel's interpretation of the scene as apotropaic).³⁵¹ There are no examples of Palm In that can easily be related to the other contextual types attested for Palm Out, such as pledging allegiance or approaching a deity with an offering.

Although the evidence just discussed indicates that the Palm In gesture is usually to be linked with Palm Out as to its function in context, there is at least one exception. The scene on the cylinder seal Ashmolean 1913.165 is a perfect example of a Mesopotamian-style presentation scene.³⁵² The Palm In gesture of the seated figure and the approaching deity is best described, echoing Frechette, as a reciprocal audience gesture reflecting the status of the addressee relative to the agent: the seated deity's hand is lowered, while that of the approaching deity (presumably a lower-ranking deity) who intercedes for the supplicant is raised.³⁵³ This example is markedly different from the other examples in our corpus, in which other kinds of scenes predominate, and in which the form of the gesture is not linked to the relative status of the agent and target. This example thus reinforces the critical role of context in differentiating gestures and their functions.

³⁵¹ For the contextual type of "surrender" for Palm Out, see section 4.3.7 and table 27 (no. 5).

³⁵² Buchanan classifies this seal as belonging to the "Old Syrian Style": see Buchanan, *AM*, 166-67. On the presentation scene in Mesopotamian art, see Henriette A. Groenewegen-Frankfort, *Arrest and Movement: An Essay on Space and Time in the Representational Art of the Ancient Near East* (New York: Hacker Art Books, Inc., 1978), 165-66, 169; Irene Winter, "The King and the Cup: Iconography of the Royal Presentation Scene on Ur III Seals," in *Insight through Images: Studies in Honor of Edith Porada*, ed. Marilyn Kelly-Buccellati (Malibu: Undena Publications, 1986), 253-68, pls. 62-64.

³⁵³ Cf. Frechette, *Mesopotamian Ritual-prayers*, 28-50.

4.5. Palm Sideways

A gesture of lifting one hand forward with the palm facing to the side, the thumb at the top, is also attested in Levantine art. This gesture is similar in distribution to Palm In, being mainly attested on Bronze Age cylinder seals, although it appears even less frequently than Palm In. Perhaps because of its relative rarity in Levantine sources and its similarity to other gestures, this palm-sideways gesture has no history of interpretation as a distinct Levantine gesture; the few studies that refer to it at all do so in vague terms, such as “hand raised.”³⁵⁴ Nevertheless, in keeping with the terminology we have used thus far, we refer to this gesture as “Palm Sideways.”

A particular problem that arises with the Palm Sideways gesture is whether it should be treated as a distinct gesture or as a variant way of representing either Palm Out or Palm In. In many cases, it is somewhat difficult to distinguish Palm Sideways from Palm In, particularly in some styles of cylinder seal carving, which show the hand as slender and without lines to distinguish the fingers. Among the cylinder seals from Alalakh, the same types of figures (specifically the “Syrian goddess” and the ruler with a rounded headdress) appear sometimes in Palm In or Palm Out and sometimes in Palm Sideways. It could be that Palm Sideways with the back of the hand facing the viewer, for example, is a way of representing Palm Out as if from the agent’s perspective or Palm In as if from the target’s perspective. Alternatively, it could be that only two gestures of lifting the hand with an open palm should be discerned: one with the thumb toward the target (Palm Out) and the other with the thumb toward the agent (comprising “Palm In” and “Palm Sideways”).

However, a couple of factors argue that Palm Sideways is actually a distinct gesture. First, there are examples in which Palm In and Palm Sideways appear on the same piece, and in such

³⁵⁴ For example, see Collon, *SITA*, 102: “The goddess raises her right hand.” The more abundantly-attested Mesopotamian and Egyptian versions of the gesture, however, have rich histories of interpretation (see below).

cases the forms of the two gestures contrast with each other. These examples include three cylinder seals in our corpus: NBC 7825, NBC 8316, and Newell 330. Second, in Egyptian art, Palm Out, Palm In, and Palm Sideways are all distinct gestures with slightly different uses.³⁵⁵ The seeming interchangeability of the two gestures in Syrian-style glyptic art can be accounted for if the gestures, although distinct, are similar enough in function that they might share the same contexts.

While it is likely that Palm Sideways is a distinct gesture, it is still difficult in many instances to distinguish it from Palm In, especially in examples that are executed with less detail. We use five criteria to help distinguish Palm In from Palm Sideways: (1) comparison between gestures shown on the same piece; (2) the width of the hand and the number of fingers shown; (3) the curvature of the fingers other than the thumb; (4) the shape of the thumb, whether convex with respect to the rest of the hand (Palm Sideways) or concave with respect to the rest of the hand (Palm In); and (5) typological comparison of motifs.

4.5.1. Palm Sideways on Cylinder Seals

Syrian-style cylinder seals showing the Palm Sideways gesture come from excavations at Alalakh and Ugarit and from the antiquities market. The distribution is very similar to Palm In: the majority of examples come from the Middle Bronze Age, while a few are from the Late Bronze Age.

³⁵⁵ Dominicus refers to Palm In and Palm Sideways in similar terms as gestures of “Rede,” “Ruf,” and “Rezitation.” However, Palm Sideways is uniquely associated with certain kinds of recitation, such as the formulaic speech of a tomb owner or the ritual recitation of a priest. See Dominicus, *Gesten und Gebärden*, 77-85, 89-95, 101 (Abb. 24), 104 (Abb. 26); see also the priests in the vignette of spell 18 in the Book of the Dead Papyrus of Ani, for example in Raymond Faulkner, *The Egyptian Book of the Dead: The Book of Going Forth by Day, being the Papyrus of Ani* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1998), pl. 12. For the functions of the Egyptian versions of Palm Out and Palm In, see the contextual syntheses in the respective sections above.

An example of Palm Out as represented on cylinder seals, this one dated on stylistic grounds to the Middle Bronze Age and now located in the Yale Babylonian Collection (Newell 303), is shown in figure 28.³⁵⁶

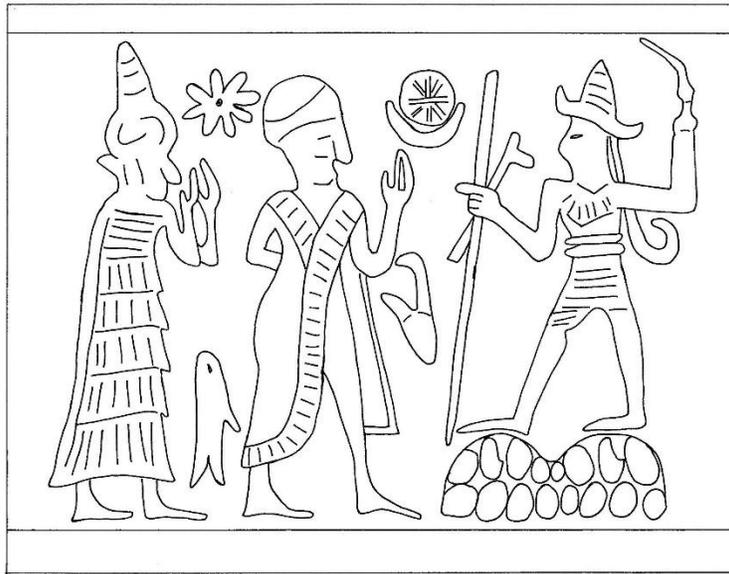


Figure 28. Cylinder seal showing Palm Sideways.
 Drawn by the author after Buchanan, *YBC*, 420.

This scene shows a male with a short and rounded headdress, standing, facing right, his left hand in Palm Sideways with a sun disk in a crescent above and an unidentified object below, his right hand seemingly held behind his back. Behind him is a female with a horned headdress and a flounced robe, standing, facing right, in Palms Sideways with an eight-pointed star above and a fish below. Facing them is a smiting god figure striding on two mountains.

The remaining cylinder seals showing this gesture are described in the following list.

Antakya 6275 (= LB Alalakh / male or female with round-topped headdress, standing, facing left, **R in Palm Sideways**, L tucked into robe; facing him/her, on other side of wave border, is male or female with short conical headdress, standing, facing right, hands raised in uncertain gesture / Collon, *SITA*, 101-2 (no. 8893, etc.) 192).

³⁵⁶ Buchanan, *YBC*, 420-21 (no. 1212).

- Antakya 7761 (7) MB Alalakh / unknown figure (almost entirely missing), facing left, **L in Palm Sideways**; facing him/her stands smiting god figure / Collon, *SITA*, 27-28 (no. 35).
- Antakya 7960-61 (12) MB Alalakh / female with horned sun disk headdress, standing, facing left, **R in Palm Sideways** with axe below, L held to chest and touching strand of her hair or wig; before her are two figures (at least one male) facing each other and grasping standard / Collon, *SITA*, 81 (no. 148).
- Antakya 8227 Alalakh / male with head missing, standing, feet facing left but upper body turned to right, **L in Palm Sideways**, R not visible; on other side of guilloche register divider and facing first figure is male with head missing, standing, **R in Palm Sideways**, L not visible; between them, and in line with their gestures, is sun disk in crescent / Collon, *SITA*, 107-8 (no. 199).
- Antakya 8562 (= 8731, 9062, 9123) LB Alalakh / male or female with round-topped headdress, standing, facing right, **L in Palm Sideways**, R not clearly visible (tucked into robe or held close to torso); before her is eagle grasping two gazelles in its talons; on other side of eagle and gazelles, facing first figure, is smiting god figure / Collon, *SITA*, 121 (no. 219).
- Ashmolean 1893.192 P, Syria / female with horned square headdress, standing, facing right, **L in Palm Sideways** with Hathor head above, R not clearly visible (perhaps tucked into robe); facing her are three figures: small male, standing, R raised in uncertain gesture, L extended forward and downward; male with tall and round-topped headdress, standing, R tucked into robe, L to the side and grasping plant or other object; male with horned headdress, standing, R forward and holding cup, L tucked into robe / Buchanan, *AM* 1, 171, pl. 55 (no. 871).
- BM 131605 LB Alalakh / female with horned square headdress, standing, facing left, **R in Palm Sideways**, L not clearly visible (tucked into robe or held close to torso); facing her is forepart of couchant bull, perhaps originally with smiting god figure (now entirely missing) / Collon, *SITA*, 119-20 (no. 217).
- Damascus 2675 MB Ugarit / nude female with short headdress, standing, facing left, **R in Palm Sideways**,³⁵⁷ L to the side; before her are two confronted figures (male with horned headdress and winged female with multiple-horned headdress) grasping a spear with point downward and eight-pointed star above / Amiet, *SC*, 27, 30 (no. 38).
- Gimbel 5 P, Syria / male with no discernible headdress, standing, facing right, **R in Palm Sideways**, L forward; facing him are griffin with human legs in kneeling posture, rampant lion with human head below forepaws; between first figure and griffin is unidentified object resembling scepter with ball / Buchanan, *YBC*, 411-13 (no. 1183).

³⁵⁷ Amiet's hand drawing seems to interpret the first figure's gesture as Palm In. However, the photograph clearly shows an extra finger indicated in the middle of the hand, which makes it appear to be Palm Sideways.

- NBC 7825 MB Syria / male with tall and round-topped headdress, standing, facing right, **R in Palm Sideways**, L held close to torso; facing him is male with rounded headdress, standing, R in Palm In, L tucked into robe; behind second figure is male or female with multi-horned headdress, standing, facing left, R in Palm In, L tucked into robe; between facing figures is unknown figure or object resembling staff with ball / Buchanan, *YBC*, 426-27 (no. 1233).
- NBC 8316 MB Syria / male with short and rounded headdress, standing, facing right, **L in Palm Sideways**, R tucked into robe; behind him is male with tall and round-topped headdress, standing, facing right, R in Palm In, L held close to body and grasping spear or arrows, star in line with raised hand; facing them is female with horned headdress and flounced robe, standing, in Palms Sideways; between facing figures are sun disk in crescent (above) and scorpion (below) / Buchanan, *YBC*, 418-19 (no. 1200).
- Newell 330 MB Syria / male with no headdress, standing, facing right, **R in Palm Sideways**, L held close to torso or tucked into robe; facing him is male with no headdress, standing, **L in Palm Sideways**, R held close to torso or tucked into robe; between them is altar and, in line with their gestures, eight-pointed star; behind first figure, separated from him by line, is male identical in appearance, standing, facing right, L in Palm In with hand close to face, R to the side / Buchanan, *YBC*, 424-25 (no. 1229).
- YBC 12618 MB Syria / male with short and rounded headdress, standing, facing right, **L in Palm Sideways**, R tucked into robe or behind back; facing him is seated male or female with headdress obscured, R forward and grasping scepter; behind seated figure is male with short and rounded headdress, standing, facing left, **R in Palm Sideways**, L not clearly visible / Buchanan, *YBC*, 420-21 (no. 1206).
- PLU (89) LB Ugarit (RS 7.181) / female with veil, standing, facing right, **L in Palm Sideways**, R held close to chest; facing her is female with horned square headdress, seated, R forward and holding a cup, L tucked into robe / Amiet, *SC*, 34, 37 (no. 45).

Once again, we can see a broad contextual similarity between Palm Out, Palm In, and Palm Sideways. YBC 12618, for example, shows a standing figure performing the Palm Sideways gesture toward the back of an enthroned figure, which compares well with category 4 in tables 22 and 28. Newell 303 shows a standing figure in Palm Sideways facing a smiting god, which compares with category 5a. Gimbel 5 shows a figure in Palm Sideways facing a winged creature and a rampant lion, which is similar to category 7a-c. Finally, the motif of two standing figures,

both in the same gesture and facing each other across an altar, is attested with Palm Sideways in Newell 330 and with Palm Out in numerous examples (although it is not attested with Palm In).

4.5.2. Metal Figurines Possibly in Palm Sideways

Three unprovenanced bronze figurines seem to be performing a gesture identical or similar to Palm Sideways. If these figurines are examples of this gesture, their contribution would be very significant, not only because they would expand the repertoire of contexts attested for the gesture, but also because they would prove the distinctiveness of this gesture vis-a-vis Palm Out and Palm In. Unfortunately, all three examples are doubtful in some respects, and ultimately the figurines fail to provide a clear witness to the Palm Sideways gesture.

The first figurine shows a striding male with a rounded headdress, his right hand raised with the hand somewhat vertical and his left hand tucked into his robe.³⁵⁸ If the gesture is in fact Palm Sideways, then this would provide another connection with Palm Out and Palm In, both of which are performed by the man wearing a rounded headdress and tucking his non-gesturing hand into his robe. However, as far as can be discerned from the published photograph (which is of poor quality),³⁵⁹ the hand is not fully vertical but is rather in a position between Palm Out and Palm Sideways. It could be that the hand has been bent in one direction or the other over time. It is possible, then, that this piece should actually be included among the examples of Palm Out.

The second figurine is a seated male with a pointed headdress (Louvre AO 2055). Both of his hands are extended forward, his right hand vertical and his left hand making a fist.³⁶⁰ Here we would have yet another connection with Palm Out and Palm In, the seated figure as an agent of

³⁵⁸ P. S. Ronzevalle, "Tête de statuette syrienne," *Mélanges de l'Université Saint-Joseph de Beyrouth* 7 (1914-1921): 127-35, pls. 3-5 (esp. 127, 132-33, pl. 5:3-4); Negbi, 42-43, 170 (no. 1430). This figurine was last known to be in the National Museum in Beirut.

³⁵⁹ See Ronzevalle, "Tête," pl. 5:3-4.

³⁶⁰ Negbi, 46, 50-53, 172, pl. 32 (no. 1456).

the gesture, which is a motif not found among the cylinder seals that show Palm Sideways.

However, in this example, the arms are very short. As Negbi's hand drawing shows,³⁶¹ when the figurine is propped up so that the back is completely vertical, the hands appear to be extended only slightly and lowered, making the resemblance to Palm Sideways less obvious at best. One wonders if the right hand was originally intended to be a fist like the left.

Finally, a female seated figurine from the vicinity of Baalbek (Ashmolean 1889.807) has the right hand in a position between Palm Out and Palm Sideways (like the standing figurine) and the left hand forward and making a fist.³⁶² Again, the hand would seem to have been bent over time, but it is not certain whether it was originally in Palm Out or Palm Sideways.

In summary, the uncertain provenance of these figurines, the uncertainty of their gesture, and the limited amount of available information force us to exclude them from our corpus. This means that, like Palm In, the certain examples of Palm Sideways are restricted to glyptic art. This is not as impressive as with Palm In, however, since the total number of examples is comparatively small.

4.5.3. Palm Sideways on Art Objects from the Iron Age

A couple of objects from the Iron Age show the Palm Sideways gesture and might be cited as evidence for the gesture's existence in the Levant during this period. These objects include an unprovenanced stamp seal showing a seated female in Palm Sideways facing a standing male in Palm In,³⁶³ and an inscribed stela from Nerab showing the priest Sin-zer-ibni standing with his right hand in Palm Sideways.³⁶⁴ However, the only thing connecting these

³⁶¹ Negbi, 52, fig. 61.

³⁶² Negbi, 90, 94-95, 187, pl. 51 (no. 1655).

³⁶³ Avigad, *Corpus*, 292-93 (no. 782).

³⁶⁴ *ANEP*, 86, 280-81 (no. 280).

pieces with the Northwest Semitic world is the fact that their inscriptions are in Aramaic, which, as we have seen, may be as much an indicator of Mesopotamian as of Levantine cultural orientation during this period. The iconography of both pieces is fully Mesopotamian, as is the style in which the figures are rendered. We also note that Sin-zer-ibni is a Mesopotamian name. Given these factors, we consider it prudent to exclude these two pieces in order to preserve the integrity of the Northwest Semitic corpus. The distribution of Palm Sideways, then, is very similar to that of Palm In, being attested (as far as the clearly Northwest Semitic examples go) only on glyptic art of the Bronze Age.

4.5.4. Context of Palm Sideways and Synthesis

Gestures resembling Palm Sideways are commonly attested in both Mesopotamian and Egyptian art. In Mesopotamian art, the gesture is very common in audience scenes depicted on cylinder seals, stelae, and other media. The gesture in this type of scene may be performed by a seated deity, an approaching mortal, and/or an interceding deity.³⁶⁵ The Palm Sideways gesture in these instances seems to be interchangeable with Palm In, and it is perhaps for this reason that the two gestures are conflated in Assyriological studies, both being interpreted as a gesture of greeting or blessing (further study of the Mesopotamian data would be necessary to determine whether these are actually distinct gestures with overlapping functions, as we have determined for the Levantine material).³⁶⁶ In Egypt, the Palm Sideways gesture is one of speech or recitation

³⁶⁵ Langdon, "Gesture in Sumerian and Babylonian Prayer"; Landsberger, "Gute Wort"; Frechette, *Mesopotamian Ritual-prayers*, 55-88.

³⁶⁶ Landsberger, "Gute Wort," 296, describes the gesture corresponding to the Akkadian term *karābu* "bless, greet" as the raising of the right forearm "mit nach innen gekehrter Handfläche"; it is uncertain whether "nach innen" here means toward the area in front of the agent (thus Palm Sideways), toward the agent's body (thus Palm In), or both. Christopher Frechette, "Reconsidering ŠU.II.2.LA(2) as a Classifier of the *āšipu* in Light of the Iconography of Reciprocal Hand-Lifting Gestures," in *Proceedings of the 51st Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale Held at the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, July 18-22, 2005*, ed. Robert D. Biggs, Jennie Myers, and Martha T. Roth (SAOC 62; Chicago: Oriental Institute, 2008), 45, recognizes that Mesopotamian hand-lifting gestures

and is especially found in the context of ritual oration. Its prevalence in this context distinguishes it from Palm Out and Palm In, which share the basic function of accompanying speech.³⁶⁷

In Levantine sources, once again, we are struck by the contextual similarity of Palm Sideways with Palm Out and Palm In. In particular, all of the examples of Palm Sideways occur in the contexts that are most commonly attested for Palm Out, namely those which we have connected with the phrase *nšw' yad (+adv)_{oath}* “lift up the hand (+adv)_{oath}” and its synonyms. As with Palm In, however, such a connection between iconographic motif and phrase cannot responsibly be made in the case of Palm Sideways, since all of the strictly Levantine data come from Bronze Age glyptic art.

Thus, for the Bronze Age, we have three gestures that occur in the same type of context: Palm Out, Palm In, and Palm Sideways. The gestures differ from one another only in the direction in which the palm faces. As we have linked this contextual type with oath-taking, one possible scenario is that these three gestures were used in conjunction with different

exchanged between confronted humans and deities “encompass a broad range of position of hand and arm, and in many cases they may be specific to a particular situation.” At the same time, he integrates them into a unified picture of gestures of salutation that are reciprocally exchanged in order to perform an auspicious encounter. Cf. Frechette, *Mesopotamian Ritual-prayers*, 35-36.

³⁶⁷ The contextual distribution of the Egyptian iconographic gestures resembling Palm Out, Palm In, and Palm Sideways is a complicated issue and has not been fully documented, hence the functions which these gestures had are still not completely understood. Lack of realism in representations of the hand is a complicating factor; another is change in the distribution of the iconographic gestures from one period to the next. See Hellmuth Müller, “Darstellungen von Gebärden auf Denkmälern des alten Reiches,” *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Abteilung Kairo* 7 (1937): 61-90; Dominicus, *Gesten und Gebärden*, 77-85, 89-95, 101 (Abb. 24), 104 (Abb. 26); John Baines, “Open Palms,” in *Sesto Congresso Internazionale di Egittologia: Atti*, ed. Jean Leclant (Turin: International Association of Egyptologists, 1992), 1:29-32. In general on representations of the hand in ancient Egyptian two-dimensional art, see Heinrich Schäfer, *Principles of Egyptian Art*, ed. Emma Brunner-Traut, transl. and ed. John Baines (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), 297-99. Nevertheless, some instances clearly show that the Egyptian artists, at least in some periods, were capable of keeping these three gestures distinct both in form and in context. See, for example, The Epigraphic Survey, *The Battle Reliefs of King Sety I* (Chicago: The Oriental Institute, 1986), pls. 14, 19, 20, 36 (Palm Out is used for offerings and for the standing goddesses behind seated Amun, while Palm Sideways is used for the king addressing a deity or an official making a report; in plate 19, the king’s hands look like Palm In and Palm Out as he holds a bouquet). Katherine Eaton, *Ancient Egyptian Temple Ritual: Performance, Patterns, and Practice* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 149-52, also observes a distinction between Palm Out (which she calls a “protective presentation” gesture) and Palm Sideways (which she calls a “greeting” gesture) in New Kingdom temple reliefs. A more systematic study of these gestures in Egyptian sources, particularly in New Kingdom iconography, is needed.

authenticating elements. For example, Palm Out could have been used for an oath by one's own life, Palm In could have been used for an oath by the life of a deity, and Palm Sideways could have been used for an oath by one's own right hand.³⁶⁸ Of course, given the lack of relevant textual sources from the period when all three gestures were in use, there is no way to substantiate the above reconstruction; we indulge in it here only to suggest one way in which these different gestures, while occurring in virtually identical contexts, might have been differentiated in function. Whatever functions these three gestures had, by the Iron Age, all seem to have leveled to Palm Out, leaving only the latter as the performative speech gesture in the context of oath-taking.

4.6. Palms Out

In sections 4.2 through 4.5, we have discussed gestures involving the lifting of one hand. We now proceed to gestures involving the lifting of both hands, beginning with the lifting of the hands in front with the palms facing outward (that is, away from the agent's body). This gesture is frequently attested in Levantine art, including stone reliefs, carved ivories, glyptic art, metal bowls, and an engraved bronze axe-head. Attestations of this gesture cover a wide chronological span, from the Middle Bronze Age through the Iron Age (although the evidence for the Middle Bronze Age is meager). As with the other gestures discussed so far, references to this gesture in modern studies typically give a brief description of its form together with a function term; for

³⁶⁸ This would account for most of the evidence, including the following peculiarities: (1) the fact that Palm In is most often used by mortals, while Palm Out is frequently used by deities; (2) the fact that Palm Out and Palm In both occur with the *ankh* symbol for "life"; and (3) the frequent occurrence of a divine symbol in line with the Palm In gesture. However, this suggestion would not readily explain the few instances in which a deity performs Palm In, nor would it account for all of the possible authenticating elements that were anciently used in oaths. For a discussion of authenticating elements in Northwest Semitic oaths, see Blane Conklin, *Oath Formulas*, 13-30.

example, “die Figur hat die Arme angewinkelt verehrend erhoben.”³⁶⁹ In our references to the gesture in this section, we use the term “Palms Out.”

4.6.1. Stone Relief Art Showing Palms Out

Two pieces of stone relief from the Levant attest the Palms Out gesture. One of these is a stela from Balu‘a, Jordan, and the other is the sarcophagus of king Ahiram from Byblos. The dating of both objects is somewhat controversial, but they are both placed sometime between the Late Bronze Age and the beginning of the Iron Age (see the references given below).

The stela from Balu‘a, now housed in the Archaeological Museum of Jordan in Amman, is shown in figure 29.³⁷⁰

³⁶⁹ Keel, *Corpus I*, 536.

³⁷⁰ G. Horsfield and L. H. Vincent, “Une stèle égypto-moabite au Balou‘a,” *RB* 41 (1932): 417-44, pls. 11-12; Étienne Drioton, “À propos de la stèle du Balou‘a,” *RB* 42 (1933): 353-65; W. A. Ward and M. F. Martin, “The Balu‘a Stela: A New Transcription with Palaeographical and Historical Notes,” *Annual of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan* 8-9 (1964): 5-29, pls. 1-6; *ANEP*, 167, 306 (no. 488); Keel, *Symbolism of the Biblical World*, 311, fig. 416; Cornelius, *Many Faces*, 112-13, unnumbered plate (cat. no. 3.3).



Figure 29. Stela from Balu'a, Jordan, showing Palms Out.
Drawn by author after Horsfield and Vincent, "Stèle égypto-moabite," pl. 11.

The middle figure represented on the stela is a male with a tall and flat-topped headdress; he stands, facing left, raising both hands in Palms Out. Behind him is a female with an *atef* crown (though without horns), standing, facing left, both hands lowered to the side, her right hand holding an *ankh* sign. Facing these two figures is a male with a Double Crown, standing, holding a *was* scepter with both hands. A sun disk in a crescent appears above the first figure's right shoulder, a crescent moon appears above his left shoulder, and a smaller disk appears immediately above and in line with his raised hands. The central figure is most likely a king, and

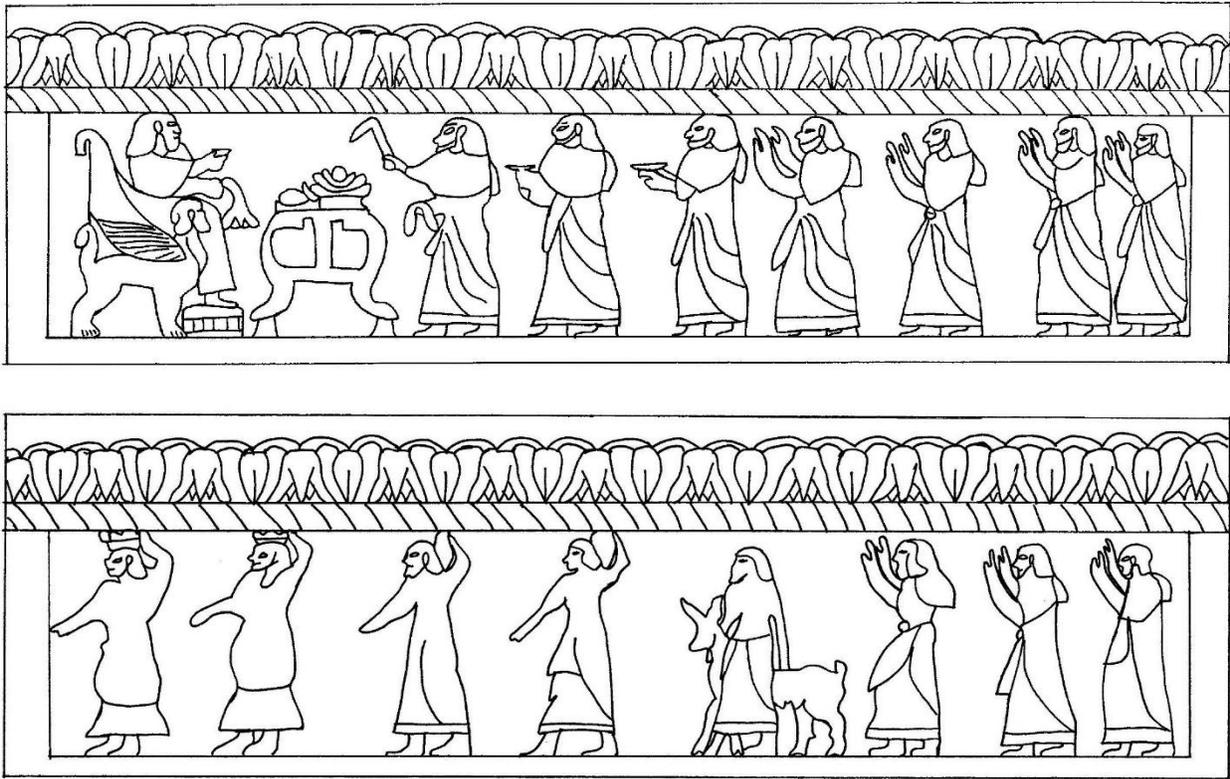
the figures flanking him are deities.³⁷¹ The top part of the stela (above the scene) contains an inscription, but it is unfortunately so worn as to be virtually illegible; even the script and language cannot be identified with certainty, although it seems to be some form of hieroglyphic writing.³⁷² This inscription thus provides no insight into the gesture performed by the middle figure.

The sarcophagus of Ahiram of Byblos, which is currently housed in the National Museum in Beirut, provides additional testimony to the Palms Out gesture from roughly the same period as the Balu‘ah stela.³⁷³ The scene carved on the sides of this sarcophagus shows a procession of figures approaching the enthroned king Ahiram, who sits behind an offering table, as shown in figures 30 and 31.

³⁷¹ Horsfield and Vincent, “Stèle égypto-moabite,” 430-41; this is accepted by Ward and Martin, “Balu‘a Stela,” 14, and it remains the consensus among commentators on the stela. The flanking figures’ divine status is indicated by their crowns and by the attributes in their hands (the *was* scepter and the *ankh*).

³⁷² See Ward and Martin, “Balu‘a Stela,” 9-13, pl. 2.

³⁷³ Noël Aimé-Giron, “Essai sur l’âge et la succession des rois de Byblos d’après leurs inscriptions,” *Annales du Service des Antiquités de l’Égypte* 42 (1943): 283-338; Frankfort, *Art and Architecture*, 159-60, figs. 76-77; *ANEP*, 157-58, 302 (nos. 456-59); Menahem Haran, “The Bas-Reliefs on the Sarcophagus of Ahiram King of Byblos in the Light of Archaeological and Literary Parallels from the Ancient Near East,” *IEJ* 8 (1958): 15-25, pls. 10-11; Raphael Giveon, “King or God on the Sarcophagus of Ahiram,” *IEJ* 9 (1959): 57-59; Maurice Chéhab, “Observations au sujet du sarcophage d’Ahiram,” *Mélanges de l’Université Saint-Joseph* 46 (1970): 107-17, pls. 1-2; Edith Porada, “Notes on the Sarcophagus of Ahiram,” *JANES* 5 (1973): 355-72. Porada argues convincingly, based on archaeological evidence from the tomb and on iconographic parallels, that the sarcophagus dates to 1000 BCE or a little later and that it was introduced secondarily into the tomb.



Figures 30-31. The sarcophagus of Ahiem from Byblos.
 Drawn by the author after Pritchard, *ANEP*, 157.

One long side of the sarcophagus shows the front of the procession, which faces left to approach or face king Ahiem. At the end of the part of the procession that is shown on this side are four practically identical males with no headdresses, who perform the Palms Out gesture. The opposite side of the sarcophagus shows the continuation of this procession; at the very end are three bearded males with no headdresses, again performing the Palms Out gesture. This scene has been interpreted as a funeral ceremony in which sustenance is offered to the deceased king.³⁷⁴ There is a Phoenician inscription around the rim of the sarcophagus lid, but beyond

³⁷⁴ For the idea that this scene is a funeral ceremony including the presentation of offerings to the deceased, which was the consensus among early interpreters of the scene, see especially Frankfort, *Art and Architecture*, 159-60. Frankfort notes the co-occurrence in this scene of signs of a banquet (the cup in the king's hand, food on the offering table, and food offerings brought by the foremost figures in the procession) and signs of mourning (the women on the short sides of the sarcophagus, who have bared breasts and gestures related to mourning; one could add the drooping lotus flower which the king holds). He relates the concept of a funerary banquet to ancient Egypt, citing a

helping to identify the seated king, this inscription does not shed light on the Palms Out gesture or the scene in general.

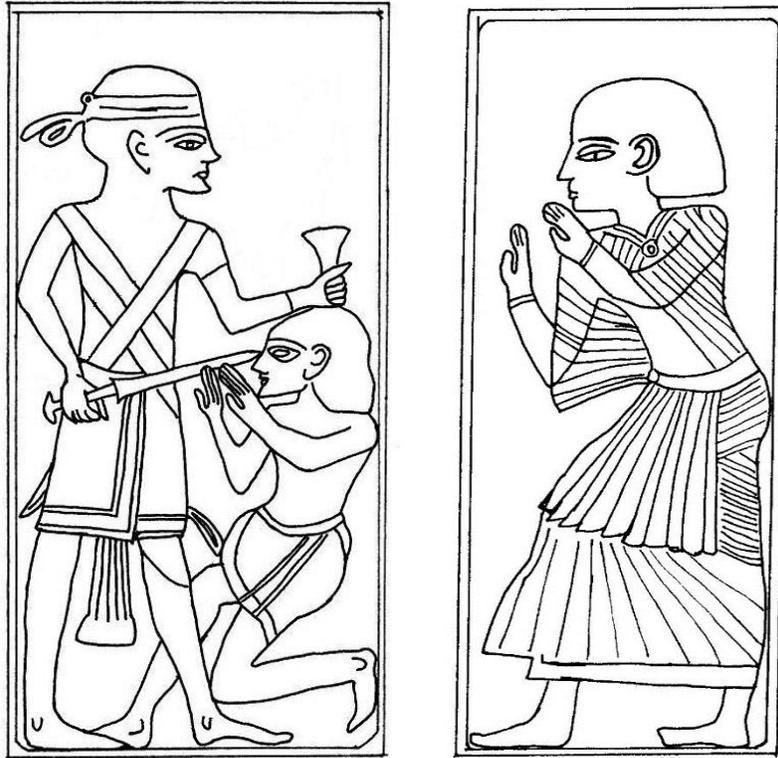
Of these two pieces, only the Ahiram sarcophagus shows a complete setting for the Palms Out gesture, namely a ritual presentation of offerings to the king. In the case of the Balu‘a stela, the king’s addressing of the deity suggests some kind of ceremonial setting, although the setting is not explicitly represented. Nevertheless, one thing that is clearly evident in both pieces is the relationship between the agent and the target of the gesture. In both cases, the agent of the Palms Out gesture is of subordinate status with respect to the target. A king addresses a deity on the Balu‘a stela, and men address their deceased and enthroned king on the Ahiram sarcophagus. This subordinate status of the agent is a consistent contextual feature of the Palms Out gesture, as will be seen in the remainder of the examples discussed below.

4.6.2. Carved Ivories Showing Palms Out

The Palms Out gesture is abundantly attested in ivory work, particularly in the ivory furniture panels from Nimrud and other Iron Age examples. For the Bronze Age, the only examples known to us come from a series of ivory furniture panels from Late Bronze Age Ugarit, now in the National Museum in Damascus. Two of the panels show figures in Palms Out. These two panels are shown in figures 32 and 33.³⁷⁵

study on this topic by Miriam Lichtheim, “The Songs of the Harpers,” *JNES* 4 (1945): 178-212. Haran, “Bas-Reliefs,” argues that the scene shows not a funerary scene focused on the deceased king but a temple ritual focused on a deity of the pantheon. However, this view has been refuted by Givon, “King or God,” who points out that Haran misinterprets the object in Ahiram’s hand as a staff instead of a drooping lotus. On the drooping lotus as a sign of death and mourning, see also Maurits Van Loon, “The Drooping Lotus Flower,” in *Insight through Images: Studies in Honor of Edith Porada*, ed. Marilyn Kelly-Buccellati (Malibu: Undena Publications, 1986), 245-52.

³⁷⁵ Schaeffer, “Fouilles de Ras Shamra-Ugarit,” *Syria* 31 (1954): 51-59, pls. 7-10; *ANESTP*, 11, 37 (no. 817); Robert du Mesnil du Buisson, “Les ivoires du palais royal de Ras Shamra, du Musée de Damas,” in *Nouvelles études sur les dieux et les mythes de Canaan* (Leiden: Brill, 1973), 167-200, pls. 10-16; Caquot and Sznycer, *Ugaritic Religion*, 27-28, pls. 28-29; Nicolas Wyatt, “The Liturgical Context of Psalm 19 and Its Mythical and Ritual Origins,” *UF* 27 (1995): 580-84.



Figures 32-33. Ivory furniture panels from Ugarit (nos. A3 and A6).
 Drawn by author after du Mesnil du Buisson, "Ivoires du palais royal," pls. 11, 13.

On panel A3, a male with no headdress, cowering and in kneeling position, performs the Palms Out gesture, while a standing male with a headband grasps the first figure's hair with his left hand and holds a sword ready to gouge out the first figure's eyes with his right. Panel A6 shows a standing figure with a pleated robe and no headdress, standing, facing left, in Palms Out. Panel A6 is at the far right of a series of six panels; the one on the far left (A1) shows a nude female standing and facing right, while the four middle panels (including A3) show right-facing figures performing various tasks, ritual and otherwise.

These panels have been interpreted in different ways. According to du Mesnil du Buisson, the left-facing figure in A6 is the patron for whom the ivory panels were made, and he is shown

rendering adoration to his gods (the right-facing figures in panels A1-A5).³⁷⁶ The figure with the headband and sword in panel A3, according to du Mesnil du Buisson, is actually the king of Ugarit, ranked among the gods as a recipient of adoration.³⁷⁷ Wyatt interprets the figure in A6 as the king of Ugarit, and the right-facing figures in panels A1-A5 are the king in different activities and aspects, representing “aspirations of perfect royal behaviour, here asked for by the king in an anticipatory prayer of petition.” That is, the king performing the Palms Out gesture to the right is shown as praying for the ideal activities and aspects shown in the other panels.³⁷⁸ Wyatt analyzes the scene in A3 as the ritual smiting of a captured enemy king by the king of Ugarit at the temple following a battle, here in the specific variant of putting out the eyes (cf. the putting out of Samson’s eyes in Judges 16:21 and those of Zedekiah in 2 Kings 25:7), as opposed to the “smashing of heads” attested elsewhere.³⁷⁹ A weakness in Wyatt’s analysis is the interpretation of the nude figure in A1, who is, according to Wyatt, “a prince, perhaps an heir.”³⁸⁰ Despite Wyatt’s attempt to argue the contrary, this nude figure is manifestly female and not male.

It is possible to suggest a compromise between the interpretations of du Mesnil du Buisson and Wyatt, namely that the left-facing figure in A6 is addressing the nude goddess in A1 concerning the royal activities represented in the middle four panels. Such a compromise seems to us to provide an optimal interpretation of the various features of this series of panels. First, the series of panels can easily be divided into two groups: (1) a pair of outer bracketing panels in which the figures face inward (A1 and A6), and (2) a series of middle panels in which the main figures face right (A2-A5). The figure in A6 differs from all the others by facing left, while

³⁷⁶ Du Mesnil du Buisson, “Ivoires du palais royal,” 168-78.

³⁷⁷ Du Mesnil du Buisson, “Ivoires du palais royal,” 177-78. Following du Mesnil du Buisson’s line of thinking with regard to the other panels, it would also be possible to interpret this figure as a warrior god, perhaps Ba’lu (here in a pose somewhat different from the typical smiting god posture).

³⁷⁸ Wyatt, “Liturgical Context,” 581.

³⁷⁹ Wyatt, “Liturgical Context,” 581; Wyatt, “Arms and the King,” 866. The “smashing of heads” refers to the smiting god motif, in which the weapon (often a mace) is raised high.

³⁸⁰ Wyatt, “Liturgical Context,” 581.

the figure in A1 is set apart from all the others by her general appearance (including the fact that she is female and her nudity). Second, the figures in the middle four panels are more likely representations of the king than deities; in particular, the figure in panel A5, who seems to be carrying an animal to present as an offering, is not likely a deity. The fact that the sword-carrying figure in A3 wears a headband instead of a more elaborate headdress may be an indicator of mortal rather than divine status, although this is not conclusive. Finally, it would seem odd in such an elaborate series of ivories if the figure in A6 were performing the Palms Out gesture with no addressee. Of all the figures in A1-A5, the most likely candidate for an addressee is the nude female (whom we presume to be a goddess) in A1, since she is the only one who is not engaged in some other activity (the nearest right-facing figure to the one in A6 is the one bringing an offering in A5, who would be a very unlikely candidate for a recipient of the gesture). In terms of the contextual analysis of the Palms Out gesture in A3 and A6, this interpretation would mean that the figure in A6 is a mortal performing Palms Out toward a goddess, petitioning her for blessings upon the king as portrayed in the middle four panels (success in the hunt, victory in battle, and increase of livestock to be given in pious offerings), and the figure in A3 is a vanquished person cowering before the victorious king.

The ivory furniture panels from Nimrud provide the richest source of examples of the Palms Out gesture. The majority of examples were found in room SW37 of the royal fortress. A typical example (Birmingham 124'61, excavation number ND 9422) is shown in figure 34.³⁸¹

³⁸¹ IN IV, 74, pls. 2-3 (no. 12); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 76 (no. S0953).

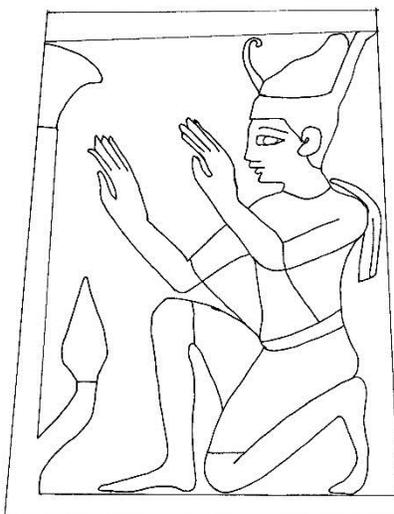


Figure 34. Ivory from Nimrud showing kneeling figure in Palms Out.
 Drawn by author after IN IV, pl. 2.12; bottom right portion reconstructed.

In this example, a male with an Egyptian-like Double Crown kneels, facing left and performing Palms Out. Before him is a large plant motif, which appears to be the target of the gesture.³⁸²

Other examples of ivories from the Iron Age that show a standing or kneeling human figure in Palms Out are listed below. Almost all of the examples are furniture panels from Nimrud, with the exception of a pyxis from Hazor (PLU [90]) and a furniture panel from Samaria (PLU [91]).

BM 132942 Iron II Nimrud (ND 10502) / male with no headdress, kneeling on right knee, facing right, **in Palms Out** / IN IV, 207, pl. 272 (no. 1049); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 145 (no. S1994).

BM
 2011.6001.393 Iron II Nimrud (ND 9093) / male with no headdress, kneeling on right knee, facing right, **in Palms Out** / IN IV, 73, pl. 1 (no. 9); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 76 (no. S0950).

³⁸² It is also possible that the target lies outside of the composition. However, some features contrast with other ivories in which a plant motif in front of the gesturing hand is less likely to be the target of the gesture; these features include the fact that the agent is not grasping the plant motif, the position of the plant motif at the border of the piece, and the appearance of the motif as one half of a symmetrical plant. Moreover, examples of Palms Out in other media also have a plant motif as target. On the identification of the plant motif as target in the Nimrud ivories, see further below.

- BM
2011.6001.448 Iron II Nimrud (ND 9363) / male with Double Crown, kneeling on left knee, facing left, **in Palms Out**; before him are traces of floral motif / IN IV, 74, pls. 2-3 (no. 13); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 76 (no. S0954).
- BM
2011.6001.487 Iron II Nimrud (ND 9528) / male with Double Crown, kneeling on left knee, facing left, **in Palms Out**; before him are traces of floral motif / IN IV, 74, pls. 2-3 (no. 14); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 76 (no. S0955).
- BM
2011.6001.606 Iron II Nimrud (ND 10374) / male with no headdress, kneeling on left knee, facing left, **in Palms Out** / IN IV, 73, pl. 1 (no. 3); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 75 (no. S0944).
- BM
2011.6001.634 Iron II Nimrud (ND 10488) / male with no headdress, kneeling on right knee, facing right, **in Palms Out** / IN IV, 104-5, pls. 50-51 (no. 232); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 91 (no. S1174).
- BM
2011.6001.690 Iron II Nimrud (ND 10657) / male with top of head missing, standing, facing left, **in Palms Out**; before him are traces of floral motif / IN IV, 75, pl. 4 (no. 21); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 77 (no. S0962).
- BM
2011.6001.705 Iron II Nimrud (ND 10703) / two symmetrical males with no headdress, standing, facing inward, **in Palms Out**; before them, in center of composition, are traces of stacked symbols including (from top to bottom) sun disk with uraeus, large *djed* column, flanking uraei facing outward, and *nub* (gold) sign / IN IV, 199, pl. 258 (no. 998); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 142 (no. S1942).
- IM 61891 Iron II Nimrud (ND 8003) / male with no headdress, kneeling on left knee, facing left, **in Palms Out** / IN IV, 106, pls. 52-53 (no. 245); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 92 (no. S1187).
- IM 61894 Iron II Nimrud (ND 7589) / male with Double Crown, kneeling on left knee, facing left, **in Palms Out** / IN V, 86-87, pl. 46 (no. 224); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 24 (no. S0231).
- IM 62501 Iron II Nimrud (ND 9423) / male with Double Crown, kneeling on right knee, facing right, **in Palms Out**; before him is floral motif / IN IV, 74, pls. 2-3 (no. 17); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 76 (no. S0958).
- IM 62729 Iron II Nimrud (ND 7696) / male with Double Crown, kneeling on right knee, facing right, **in Palms Out**; before him is floral motif / IN IV, 74-75, pl. 2 (no. 18); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 76 (no. S0959).
- IM 62767 Iron II Nimrud (ND 8099) / male with Double Crown, kneeling on right knee, facing right, **in Palms Out** / IN V, 73, pl. 31 (no. 150); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 18 (no. S0154).

- IM 65181 Iron II Nimrud (ND 9347) / male with sun disk on head, kneeling on right knee, facing right, **in Palms Out**; before him is floral staff; facing him, on other side of floral staff, is mirror-image kneeling male figure **in Palms Out** / IN IV, 75, pl. 3 (no. 19); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 76 (no. S0960).
- IM 65299 Iron II Nimrud (ND 10376) / male with horned sun disk headdress, standing/striding, facing left, **in Palms Out**; he is the fourth of five left-facing processional figures, the first four of which are male and the fifth of which is female carrying bird / IN IV, 189, pls. 242, 245 (no. 940); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 138 (nos. S1882-83).
- IM 65346 Iron II Nimrud (ND 10473) / male with no headdress, kneeling on left knee, facing left, **in Palms Out** / IN IV, 73, pl. 1 (no. 7); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 76 (no. S0948).
- IM 65349 Iron II Nimrud (ND 10479) / male with Double Crown, kneeling on left knee, facing left, **in Palms Out** / IN IV, 73, pl. 1 (no. 6); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 76 (no. S0947).
- IM 65354 Iron II Nimrud (ND 10486) / falcon-headed male with Double Crown, kneeling on left knee, facing left, **in Palms Out**; before him is floral staff / IN IV, 102, pls. 46-47 (no. 210); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 89 (no. S1152).
- IM 65355 Iron II Nimrud (ND 10489) / male with no headdress, kneeling on right knee, facing right, **in Palms Out** / IN IV, 107, pl. 54 (no. 251); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 92 (no. S1193).
- IM 65376 Iron II Nimrud (ND 10554) / male with no headdress, kneeling on right knee, facing right, **in Palms Out** / IN IV, 105, pl. 50 (no. 235); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 91 (no. S1177).
- IM 65377 Iron II Nimrud (ND 10557) / male with no headdress, kneeling on left knee, facing left, **in Palms Out** / IN IV, 114, pl. 72 (no. 315); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 96 (no. S1257).
- IM 65400 Iron II Nimrud (ND 10658) / male with no headdress, kneeling on left knee, facing left, **in Palms Out** / IN IV, 73, pl. 1 (no. 8); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 76 (no. S0949).
- IM 74833 Iron II Nimrud (ND 13114) / male with short headdress, standing, facing left, **in Palms Out**; before him are stacked symbols including (from top to bottom) sun disk with uraeus, large *djed* pillar, flanking uraei facing outward (only one extant), and *nub* (gold) sign; traces of other figure facing him, on other side of stacked symbols, but this other figure is motly missing / IN IV, 199, pl. 258 (no. 997); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 142 (no. S1941).
- IM NN (12) Iron II Nimrud (ND 13087) / male with head missing, kneeling on left knee, facing left, **in Palms Out**; before him is floral motif / IN IV, 74, pls. 2-3 (no. 16); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 76 (no. S0957).

- IM NN (13) Iron II Nimrud (ND 13128) / uncertain figure (mostly missing), facing right, **in Palms Out**; before him/her are traces of floral motif / IN IV, 227, pl. 311 (no. 1193); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 155 (no. S2138).
- IM NN (14) Iron II Nimrud (ND 13523) / male with Double Crown, standing or kneeling (lower body missing), facing right, **in Palms Out**; before him are traces of floral motif / IN IV, 227, pl. 311 (no. 1192); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 155 (no. S2137).
- IM NN (15) Iron II Nimrud (ND 13649) / male with Double Crown, standing or kneeling (lower body missing), facing left, **in Palms Out**; before him is remnant of floral motif / IN IV, 74, pls. 2-3 (no. 15); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 76 (no. S0956).
- IM NN (16) Iron II Nimrud (ND 13650) / male with head missing, kneeling on left knee (missing), facing left, **in Palms Out** / IN IV, 107, pl. 54 (no. 252); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 92 (no. S1194).
- MMA 60.145.2 Iron II Nimrud (ND 9360) / falcon-headed male with Double Crown, kneeling on right knee, facing right, **in Palms Out**; before him is floral motif / IN IV, 78, pl. 8 (no. 41); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 78 (no. S0982).
- PLU (90) Iron II Hazor / male with no headdress, kneeling on right knee, facing right, **in Palms Out**; before him are traces of stylized tree; on other side of tree, facing first figure, is standing griffin / Yadin, *Hazor I*, pl. 155; Keel, *Symbolism of the Biblical World*, 315, fig. 421.
- PLU (91) Iron II Samaria / male with no headdress, cowering on knees, lower body facing right but upper body turned to left, **in Palms Out**; facing him (on the left) is male smiting figure with Double Crown, R in Fist Up with mace, L forward and grasping first figure by the hair; floral motif on the left / Crowfoot and Crowfoot, *Early Ivories*, 31, pl. 14.1; Keel, *Symbolism of the Biblical World*, 296, fig. 401.

These ivories provide very little information on the overall setting of the Palms Out gesture. In almost all examples, the scene is devoid of indicators of place, time, or ritual setting. The one exception is IM 65299, which shows a procession of human figures presenting offerings. The ritual setting in this case is similar to the Ahiram sarcophagus, except that the presentation of offerings in the latter is of a more clearly funerary purpose. In both of these examples, the agent of Palms Out is one or more of the people in the procession.

While many of these examples show only a human agent with no explicit target, many do show a target. The most frequent type of target by far is a plant motif. This often consists of a central stalk and a smaller shoot to the side, both topped with an open or closed lotus flower (it is possible that a symmetrical second shoot was shown on a corresponding panel). In PLU (90), however, the plant motif is more stylized. That this plant motif is the target is evident from its large size and its position directly in front of the gesturing figure (compare the criteria used above for identifying whether a plant motif is the target of Palm Out). In two examples, the target is a large *djed* column topped by a sun disk with uraeus and standing, in turn, upon a collar of beads that is the Egyptian hieroglyph for *nb* “gold” (referred to here as the *nub* sign). The target of the gesture on IM 65299 was a now-missing circular element that stood between this piece and its sister piece IM 65335 (the latter is presented under Palm Out, in section 4.3.3). This circular element was most likely a cartouche, given its neat circular shape and the typology of targets of Palm Out (see above). Finally, in PLU (91), as in the Ugarit ivory panel A3, the target of Palms Out is a smiting figure about to slay the agent of the gesture. The various targets are summarized in table 29.

Table 29. Targets of Palms Out in Nimrud Ivories

Target	Examples	Total
plant motif	Birmingham 124'61, BM 2011.6001.448, BM 2011.6001.487, BM 2011.6001.690, IM 62501, IM 62729, IM 65181, IM 65354, IM NN (12)-(15), MMA 60.145.2, PLU (90)	14
<i>djed</i> column	BM 2011.6001.705, IM 74833	2
figure poised to slay target	Ugarit ivory panel A3, PLU (91)	2
nude goddess	Ugarit ivory panel A6	1
cartouche (?)	IM 65299	1

In these ivories in which the agent of Palms Out is a human, the agent is in one of three postures: standing, kneeling, or cowering (the latter may resemble kneeling, but with the body twisted and/or off-balance rather than erect). Unlike Palm Out, the agent of Palms Out is never seated. We shall see below that this applies to the other examples of Palms Out in our corpus as well. The range of postures for Palms Out suggests that this gesture is linked to low status, particularly relative to the status of the target. The agent, though sometimes bare-headed, often wears an Egyptian-like Double Crown, indicating royal status. In addition, in IM 65354 and MMA 60.145.2, the agent not only wears a Double Crown but also has a falcon head. However, even the falcon-headed and the crowned figures are shown in the kneeling posture, as in Birmingham 124'61. In examples of this kind, it makes sense to understand the plant motif or other target as a sacred object, perhaps a symbol of a deity, with respect to which a king or lower deity presents himself as subordinate. In the Ugarit panel A3 and in PLU (91), the agent of Palms Out is definitely of lower status than the smiting figure, at least in the *de facto* sense of being at the smiting figure's mercy. The relative status of the cowering and smiting figures is reflected visually in their relative size and position: the former, crouching down with his upper limbs close to his body, appears physically low and compressed; the latter, towering above, appears high and large. In addition, the grabbing of the cowering figure's hair is both a physical and a symbolic sign of the smiting figure's dominant role.

Another motif attested among the Nimrud ivories is that of a couchant sphinx, griffin, or ram-headed winged creature with human arms raised in Palms Out. Figure 35 shows an example of this motif (IM 61873, excavation number ND 7782).³⁸³

³⁸³ IN V, 91-92, pl. 48 (no. 250).

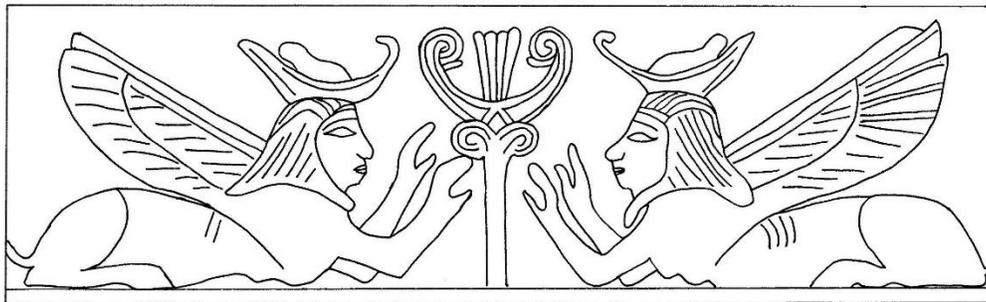


Figure 35. Nimrud ivory showing couchant sphinxes in Palms Out.
 Drawn by the author after Herrmann, IN V, pl. 48.

Here two sphinxes wearing modified forms of the Egyptian Double Crown are shown, both facing inward toward a stylized tree. Other examples of this motif have only one winged creature, or, in a few cases, two winged creatures facing outward rather than inward. These other examples are summarized in the following list.

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| BM 132918 | Iron II Nimrud (ND 9483) / couchant winged creature with ram head and lion body, wearing Double Crown, facing left, in Palms Out ; before this creature is floral motif / IN IV, 154-55, pl. 156 (no. 647); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, <i>Published Ivories</i> , 118 (no. S1589). |
| BM
2011.6001.340 | Iron II Nimrud (ND 8057) / couchant winged sphinx with top of head missing, facing left, in Palms Out / IN IV, 155, pl. 158 (no. 650); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, <i>Published Ivories</i> , 119 (no. S1592). |
| IM 72082 | Iron II Nimrud (ND 9713) / two mirror-image couchant winged sphinxes with Double Crown, facing outward, in Palms Out ; before them (on outside of composition) are floral motifs / IN IV, 155, pl. 158 (no. 649); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, <i>Published Ivories</i> , 119 (no. S1591). |
| IM NN (17) | Iron II Nimrud (ND 9537) / couchant griffin with Double Crown, facing right, in Palms Out / IN IV, 104, pl. 49 (no. 231); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, <i>Published Ivories</i> , 91 (no. S1173). |
| IM NN (18) | Iron II Nimrud (ND 13217) / couchant winged sphinx with top of head missing, facing left, in Palms Out / IN IV, 155, pl. 159 (no. 653); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, <i>Published Ivories</i> , 119 (no. S1595). |
| IM NN (19) | Iron II Nimrud (ND 13219) / couchant winged creature with ram head and lion body, wearing Double Crown, facing right, in Palms Out ; before this creature is floral motif / IN IV, 155, pl. 156 (no. 648); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, <i>Published Ivories</i> , 118 (no. S1590). |

- IM NN (20) Iron II Nimrud (ND 13645) / couchant griffin with Double Crown, facing left, **in Palms Out** / IN IV, 90, pl. 28 (no. 121); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 83 (no. S1063).
- MMA 61.197.2 Iron II Nimrud (ND 10637) / couchant griffin with Double Crown, facing right, **in Palms Out** / IN IV, 90, pl. 28 (no. 120); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 83 (no. S1062).
- MMA 67.22.3 Iron II Nimrud (ND 9603) / two mirror-image couchant winged creatures with ram heads and lion bodies, wearing Double Crown, facing outward, **in Palms Out** / IN IV, 154, pl. 157 (no. 645); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 118 (no. S1587).
- UPenn 65.3.3 Iron II Nimrud (ND 10313) / couchant griffin with sun disk and uraeus on head, facing left, **in Palms Out** / IN IV, 154, pl. 158 (no. 644); Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 118 (no. S1586).
- PLU (92) Iron II Nimrud (ND unregistered) / two mirror-image couchant winged creatures with ram heads and lion bodies, wearing Double Crown, facing outward, **probably in Palms Out (forepaws missing)** / Herrmann, Coffey, and Laidlaw, *Published Ivories*, 118 (no. S1588).

In eight of the twelve examples (including IM 61873, shown in figure 35), a stylized plant motif functions as the target (IM 61873, BM 132918, IM 72082, IM NN [18], IM NN [19], MMA 61.197.2, MMA 67.22.3, PLU [92]); in some of these cases, only traces of the motif survive. As with the ivories in which the agent is a human figure, the plant seems to be an object of veneration.³⁸⁴

4.6.3. Palms Out in Glyptic Art

Four cylinder seals excavated from Late Bronze Age contexts at Ugarit show the Palms Out gesture. In addition, one unprovenanced seal, now in the Ashmolean museum, is dated on

³⁸⁴ Cf. Keel, *Symbolism*, 141-43. It is noteworthy that the sphinxes or griffins always face toward the tree, never away from it as would be expected if their function were to guard the tree (cf. Genesis 3:24; Keel, *Symbolism*, 123).

stylistic grounds to the Middle Bronze Age.³⁸⁵ One of the seals from Ugarit (Damascus 2715, excavation number RS 22.242) is shown in figure 36.³⁸⁶

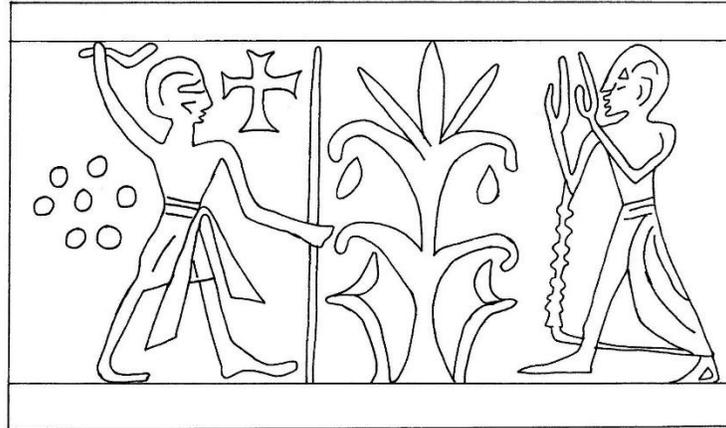


Figure 36. Cylinder seal from Ugarit showing Palms Out.
Drawn by the author after Amiet, *SC*, 84.

In the scene is a male with no headdress, striding, facing left, in Palms Out. Before him is a large plant motif, which functions as the target, in accordance with the target role of plant motifs in the ivories discussed above. On other side of the plant motif, facing toward it like the first figure, is a male smiting god figure with a cross symbol in front of his face. Seven globules (representing the Pleiades, or perhaps a stylized rosette) occupy the field between and behind the backs of the two human figures.

The other four seals, including the Middle Bronze Age example in the Ashmolean museum, are presented in the list below.

³⁸⁵ See the list below, Ashmolean 1933.1692. Buchanan assigns this seal to the “Old Syrian Style” (mid-19th to late 17th century BCE). Buchanan, *AM* 1, 165, 169 (no. 858).

³⁸⁶ Amiet, *SC*, 76, 84 (no. 175).

- Ashmolean 1933.1692 P, MB Syria / female with twisted horn headdress, standing, facing left, **in Palms Out** with *ankh* sign below; before her is male with no headdress, seated, facing right, R forward and holding uncertain object, bird with outstretched wings above; facing them is small child, standing, L extended forward; behind child is adult male with no headdress, standing, arms not visible / Buchanan, *AM* 1, 169, pl. 55 (no. 858).
- Damascus 2849 LB Ugarit / male or female with top of head missing, standing, facing right, **in Palms Out**; behind him/her is another male or female, standing, facing right, in uncertain gesture / Amiet, *SC*, 205, 217 (no. 553).
- Damascus 2898 LB Ugarit / male with horned headdress, tail, and animal legs,³⁸⁷ standing, facing left, **in Palms Out**; before him is stylized tree motif flanked by standing males with conical headdresses, in Palm Out / Amiet, *SC*, 75, 83 (no. 172).
- PLU (93) LB Ugarit (RS 11.725) / male or female with no discernible headdress, standing, facing left, **in Palms Out** with scorpion below; before him/her is male or female with no discernible headdress, seated, facing left, in uncertain hand gesture / Amiet, *SC*, 96, 108 (no. 242).

The seal Damascus 2898 provides yet another example of the plant motif as target of the Palms Out gesture.

On Ashmolean 1933.1692 and PLU (93), a goddess performs Palms Out toward the back of an enthroned figure. This kind of target differs from those seen in the other examples of Palms Out in our corpus, but it may be compared with the similar scene in which the goddess performs Palm Out (see category 4 in table 22 above). On one of these seals, Ashmolean 1933.1692, an *ankh* sign appears below the arms that perform the gesture, again recalling Palm Out. It is possible that the *ankh* sign here actually signifies a blessing of life imparted by the agent of the gesture to the target. We rejected this analysis in the case of Palm Out, but it could work in this case, since the agent is a goddess (she wears a horned headdress). However, it is also possible that Palms Out in the contextual type represented by these two seals is a two-handed oath gesture like that discussed in section 3.3.1. Unfortunately, this contextual type is poorly attested in

³⁸⁷ Amiet, *SC*, 75, calls this figure a “homme-taureau.”

Northwest Semitic iconography and is of uncertain significance. Given that this analysis is fraught with ambiguities, we consider it best to refrain from a rigid stance as to the significance of these examples.

Many scarab seals found in excavations in the southern Levant show the Palms Out gesture. However, most of these are Late Bronze Age seals that are clearly Egyptian in style and cultural orientation. These scarabs are not included in our corpus, yet they are useful in demonstrating the presence of certain motifs incorporating the Palms Out gesture in the Levant during this period. Modified forms of these motifs recur in Levantine iconography during the Late Bronze and Iron Ages, and it is conceivable that the Egyptian scarabs found in the southern Levant played a role in the adoption of these motifs by Northwest Semites. Prominent among the motifs on the Egyptian scarabs is that of the Pharaoh standing before Ptah or another deity and performing Palms Out,³⁸⁸ and that of the Pharaoh smiting a cowering captive who performs Palms Out.³⁸⁹ The motif of the smiting Pharaoh, in particular, was borrowed with very little modification and appears on Levantine ivories and metal bowls.

In contrast to the large number of Egyptian scarabs just discussed, only one strictly Levantine scarab showing the Palms Out gesture is known to the present author. This scarab was excavated at Azor and is now in the care of the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA 60-517). The dating of this example is complicated. It was found in an Iron Age I context (worn on the neck as an amulet by a child interred in a tomb), but the piece is dated somewhat earlier (to the 19th dynasty, ca. 1295-1186 BCE), and its general style and iconographic parallels belong to the Middle Bronze Age.³⁹⁰ In essence, aside from the Palms Out gesture, this seal's style and

³⁸⁸ Keel, *Corpus I*, 596-97 (no. 189); Keel, *Corpus II*, 156-57 (no. 134), 432-33 (no. 73), 442-43 (no. 99); Keel, *Corpus III*, 270-71 (no. 565), 306-7 (no. 651), 358-59 (no. 781).

³⁸⁹ Keel, *Corpus II*, 118-19 (no. 47); Keel, *Corpus III*, 270-71 (no. 566).

³⁹⁰ Keel, *Corpus I*, 748-49 (no. 1).

iconography are those of the Middle Bronze Age Hyksos scarabs. This seal from Azor is shown in figure 37.

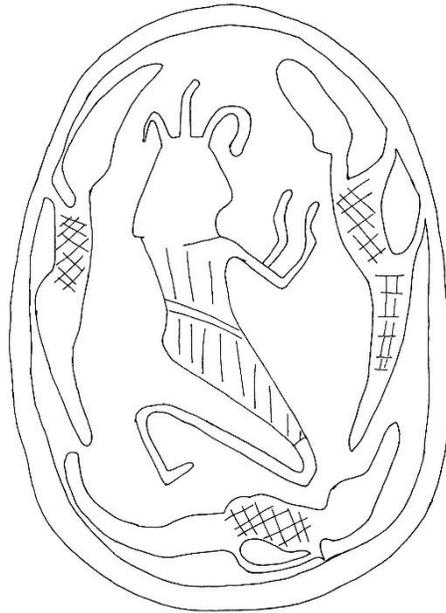


Figure 37. Scarab seal from Azor showing Palms Out.
Drawn by the author after Keel, *Corpus I*, 749.

Shown on this seal is a female with a plant-like headdress, kneeling on both knees, in Palms Out. Surrounding her, around the inside of the seal border, are three crocodiles. Given the arrangement of the crocodiles as a sort of inner border, not only in line with the gesture but all around the kneeling figure, it seems unlikely that the crocodiles are the target of the Palm Out gesture. The target must therefore be absent in this example.

Several stamp seals, mostly unprovenanced except for three excavated at Akko, provide evidence of Palms Out as a glyptic motif during the Iron Age. One of the unprovenanced seals (HebU 734) is illustrated in figure 38.³⁹¹

³⁹¹ Avigad, *Corpus*, 445 (no. 1175).

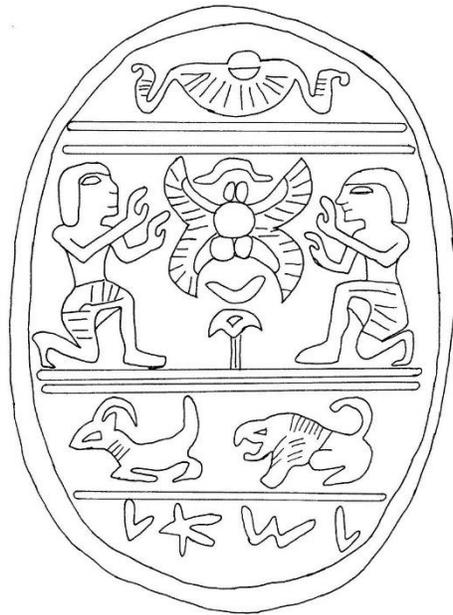


Figure 38. Stamp seal showing Palms Out.
 Drawn by the author after Avigad, *Corpus*, 445.

Two males with no headdresses are depicted on this seal, each kneeling on one knee, facing inward toward a winged scarab on a floral motif; both flanking figures are in Palms Out. The winged scarab also appears on a metal bowl as target of the Palms Out gesture (see below).

The following list summarizes the remaining stamp seals showing the Palms Out gesture.

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Ashmolean
1914.57
(Underside) | P, in or near Syria / two males with no headdress, standing, facing inward, in Palms Out ; between them is four-winged male or female with animal head, standing, facing right, arms not clearly visible / Avigad, <i>Corpus</i> , 435-36 (no. 1149). |
| Haifa H-1932 | P, Unknown provenance / male with no headdress, standing, facing right, in Palms Out ; before him is tall plant or cult stand / Avigad, <i>Corpus</i> , 290 (no. 775). |
| IAA 68.35.197 | P, in or near Jerusalem / male with horned sun disk headdress, kneeling on left knee atop lotus bud, facing left, in Palms Out ; flanking him are two falcon-headed figures, each with Double Crown, sitting on lotus buds connected to the first, facing inward with one hand raised in uncertain gesture / Avigad, <i>Corpus</i> , 89 (no. 126). |

- IAA 73-38 Iron II Akko / male or female with no discernible headdress, standing, facing left, **in Palms Out**; behind and before her are stylized angular *ankh* signs or incense stands / Keel, *Corpus* I, 582-83 (no. 147).
- IAA 73-157 Iron II Akko / male with no discernible headdress, standing, facing right, **in Palms Out**; behind him is branch or tree; before him is altar; moon crescent and eight-pointed star above / Keel, *Corpus* I, 536-37 (no. 17).
- IAA 73-183 Iron II Akko / male or female with no discernible headdress, standing, facing left, **in Palms Out** with star immediately before and stylized angular *ankh* sign or incense stand below; behind him is diamond shape / Keel, *Corpus* I, 588-89 (no. 167).
- PBN Chabouillet 1050/3 (= M 8536) Unknown provenance / male with no headdress, kneeling on right knee, facing right, **in Palms Out**; before him is lion sitting on lotus flower, facing right; below scene is winged scarab / Avigad, *Corpus*, 409 (no. 1082).
- PBN M 6456 Unknown provenance / male with no headdress, standing or striding, facing right, **in Palms Out** with forearms lowered so that palms are nearly parallel to ground / Avigad, *Corpus*, 339 (no. 911).
- PBN M 6761 (Side A) Unknown provenance / male with no headdress, standing, facing left, **in Palms Out** / Avigad, *Corpus*, 301-2 (no. 805).
- PML 284 Unknown provenance / male with no headdress, standing, facing left, **in Palms Out**; before him is bird on small plant motif, facing left / Avigad, *Corpus*, 368 (no. 995).
- PLU (94) Unknown provenance / male or female with no headdress, standing, facing right, **in Palms Out**; before him/her is small plant motif / Avigad, *Corpus*, 368 (no. 994).

These stamp seals provide little information on the target of the Palms Out gesture; most have no target depicted, the only exception being Ashmolean 1914.57, on which a four-winged being with an animal head is the target of the gesture. They do, however, provide information on the setting. On IAA 73-157, an altar or offering table is shown in front of the agent, implying that the gesture is taking place on temple space. IAA 73-38 and IAA 73-183 depict what may be an incense stand before (and, in the case of IAA 73-38, also behind) the agent; it is also possible to analyze this as a stylized *ankh* sign with the top flattened and with an extra cross-bar, but this would be unusual, both in terms of the way of representing the *ankh* sign and in terms of the distribution of this sign elsewhere in the corpus (the *ankh* is more typically associated with Palm

Out). The agent in all examples is ambiguous, but it would seem to be a mortal in most cases, given the lack of a headdress. An exception is IAA 68.35.197, on which the agent wears a horned sun disk headdress and sits on a lotus, recalling the Egyptian motif of the child Horus (Harpokrates) sitting on a lotus.

4.6.4. Metal Bowls Showing Palms Out

Several Phoenician metal bowls show the Palms Out gesture performed within a larger context. Together with the stone reliefs, some of the ivories, and the cylinder seals, these bowls provide an opportunity to examine this gesture within its wider ritual context. The bowls, which come from an assortment of sites in the eastern and western Mediterranean but are nevertheless of Phoenician workmanship and iconographic tradition, are summarized in the following list.

- | | |
|---------------------------|---|
| BM 123053 | Amathus / falcon-headed male with sun disk and uraeus headdress, kneeling on pedestal with right knee, facing right, in Palms Out ; before him is winged scarab on pedestal, holding sun disks with forelegs and hind legs; on other side of winged scarab is falcon-headed figure with features identical to first figure, kneeling on pedestal with left knee, facing left, in Palms Out / Markoe, <i>Bowls</i> , 172-74, 248-49 (no. Cy4). |
| BM Cat. of
Bronzes 186 | Salamis (Cyprus) / group of superimposed males with no headdresses, standing/cowering, lower bodies facing right but upper bodies turned to left, in Palms Out ; facing them (to the left) is male with <i>atef</i> crown, standing, R in Fist Up with mace, L forward and grasping first figures by the hair / Markoe, <i>Bowls</i> , 174-75, 251 (no. Cy5) |
| Calabria NN | Iron II Francavilla Marittima (Calabria, Italy) / male with short headdress, standing, facing right, in Palms Out ; facing him is a long procession of male and female figures, apparently deities; at the end of the procession (with his back to the first figure) is another male with features virtually identical to the first, standing, facing left, in Palms Out ; the last deity in the procession turns so that her upper body is facing the second Palms Out figure, and she raises L in Palm Out toward him / Markoe, <i>Bowls</i> , 161-62, 232 (no. Ca1). |

- Louvre AO 20134 Idalion / group of superimposed males with no headdresses, kneeling/cowering, lower bodies facing right but upper bodies turned to left, **in Palms Out**; facing them (to the left) is male with *atef* crown, standing, R in Fist Up with mace, L forward and grasping first figures by the hair / Perrot, *History of Art*, 2:348-49; Markoe, *Bowls*, 170-71, 244-45 (no. Cy2).
- MMA 74.51.4556 Kourion / group of superimposed males with no headdresses, kneeling/cowering, lower bodies facing right but upper bodies turned to left, **in Palms Out**; facing them (to the left) is male with *atef* crown, standing, R in Fist Up with mace, L forward and grasping first figures by the hair / Markoe, *Bowls*, 177, 254 (no. Cy7).
- PMPP Dutuit 170 Pontecagnano / group of superimposed males with no headdresses, kneeling/cowering, lower bodies facing right but upper bodies turned to left, **in Palms Out**; facing them (to the left) is male with *atef* crown, standing, R in Fist Up with mace, L forward and grasping first figures by the hair / Markoe, *Bowls*, 198-99, 303 (no. E10).
- RMVG 61574 Praeneste, Bernardini Tomb / three superimposed males with no headdresses, kneeling/cowering, lower bodies facing right but upper bodies turned to left, **in Palms Out**; facing them (to the left) is male with *atef* crown, standing, R in Fist Up with mace, L grasping first three figures by the hair / Curtis, "Bernardini Tomb," 43-45 and pls. 22-23 (No. 26); Frankfort, *Art and Architecture*, 199-200, fig. 97; Markoe, *Bowls*, 188-91, 274-76 (no. E1).
- PLU (57) Unknown provenance / male with no headdress, standing, facing left, **in Palms Out**; facing him is male with identical features, standing, facing right, both hands extended and raised with palms upward, each hand holding a ball-shaped object; behind this second figure is offering table loaded with offerings and, behind that, seated figure facing right / Markoe, *Bowls*, 218-19, 350-51 (no. U8).

The majority of these examples show the motif of the cowering captive performing Palms Out toward a royal or divine figure who is about to smite (BM Cat. of Bronzes 186, Louvre AO 20134, MMA 74.51.4556, PMPP Dutuit 170, RMVG 61574).³⁹² As discussed above, this motif is also attested during the same general period on a carved ivory from Samaria (see PLU [91] in section 4.6.2). On BM 123053, kneeling figures flank and perform the gesture toward a winged scarab, which is similar to the stamp seal HebU 734. On Calabria NN, two standing figures on either side of a group of deities face inward and perform Palms Out toward the deities; this is

³⁹² For discussion of this motif, see Markoe, *Bowls*, 45-47.

consistent with the many examples of a mortal performing this gesture toward a deity. Finally, in PLU (57), the context seems to be that of an audience with a seated figure in a temple or funerary setting (columns, arches, and an offering table are represented). The scene would be perfectly understandable as the agent performing Palms Out toward the seated figure across an offering table, if it were not for another figure who stands directly in front of the agent and faces him, holding two ball-shaped objects (perhaps vessels or bread loaves) in his outstretched hands. One way to interpret this other figure might be as a second iteration of the one who performs Palms Out. The two figures are identical in their features, and their feet overlap.³⁹³ Thus we might have a depiction of a single figure both performing the Palms Out gesture and making an offering. In view of the range of contexts attested for Palms Out in our corpus, it seems unlikely that the man holding offerings is the target of the Palms Out gesture.

4.6.5. Palms Out on Engraved Bronze Axe Head

An engraved bronze axe head (Beirut 4046), already discussed above under Fist Up (section 4.2.6), shows two kneeling figures in Palms Out flanking and facing inward toward a standing female.³⁹⁴ The latter's right hand performs the Fist Up gesture with a dagger while her left hand holds a mirror. Since the central female wears a horned *atef* crown, it is likely that she represents a goddess. Thus we have here yet another example of the Palms Out gesture being performed toward a superior (the difference in status being also marked by the kneeling posture of the flanking figures).

³⁹³ Compare the unnamed Egyptian official in a relief of Horemheb: P. A. A. Boeser, *Die Denkmäler des neuen Reiches*, vol. 1 (Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1911), pl. 24. The herald is shown twice, first in the attitude of hearing the plea of a group of non-Egyptians and then in the attitude of reporting to Horemheb. The official in the second instance partially covers the first, as if previous events are receding further into the background and are being replaced or covered over with newer events. In the case of PLU (57), the figure holding the ball-shaped objects partially covers the figure in Palms Out.

³⁹⁴ Seeden, *Standing Armed Figurines*, pl. 131.11.

4.6.6. Contextual Comparison of Palms Out and Gesture Phrases

Having presented the Levantine data for the Palms Out gesture, we now proceed to summarize what these data reveal about the contexts in which the gesture occurs and to examine possible links with gesture phrases used in literature. Previous scholarship on these topics has been shaped by the fact that Palms Out is widely attested in ancient Egypt (both in iconographic scenes and in the hieroglyphic writing system, from the Old Kingdom through the Roman period) but is virtually unknown in classical Mesopotamian iconography. This fact has resulted in two distinct approaches to the linking of iconographic and textual sources on Northwest Semitic gestures. One approach privileges comparisons with Mesopotamian material and precludes a connection between Palms Out and phrases used in literature, while the other approach privileges the Egyptian material and links Palms Out with biblical phrases referring to the lifting of both hands in prayer.

Mayer Gruber, a major proponent of the first approach, argues that the principal Northwest Semitic phrases referring to the lifting of both hands in prayer describe two distinct gestures: (1) a gesture of worship denoted by phrases using the verb *nʿśʿ* ‘lift up,’ the gesture being understood as a form of pointing to God’s celestial abode; and (2) a gesture of supplication denoted by phrases using the verbs *pʿraś/peʿraś* ‘spread (out),’ the gesture symbolizing a request for the empty hands to be filled.³⁹⁵ Gruber’s analysis is based exclusively on Northwest Semitic textual sources and comparison with data from Akkadian textual sources. Thus it is uncertain how he visualizes these two gestures. It is possible that for the second gesture, he is envisioning something like Palms In, which is attested in Assyrian iconography in contexts that could be

³⁹⁵ Gruber, *Aspects of Nonverbal Communication*, 22-44.

equated with supplication.³⁹⁶ However, Gruber's analysis practically rules out any connection with Levantine iconography, since the latter furnishes no evidence of a pair of two-handed gestures that fits satisfactorily with his analysis.³⁹⁷

Othmar Keel, representing the second approach, focuses on Levantine and Egyptian iconographic sources for the Palms Out gesture and makes loose comparisons between the iconographic examples and biblical texts. He sees this gesture as having three different ritual functions, each corresponding to distinct contextual types in iconography and texts. First, the gesture has “a defensive, aversive significance.” For example, it may be used when approaching the presence of a deity, in which case “it expresses the attempt to restrain a superior, numinous opposite [i.e. the deity] by means of conjuring, thus rendering it serviceable or averting it.”³⁹⁸ As further examples of the “defensive, aversive” function, Keel cites the iconographic motif of the cowering captive about to be smitten and the biblical narrative of Moses raising his “hands” in the battle against the Amalekites (Exodus 17:11-12).³⁹⁹ The second function of Palms Out

³⁹⁶ See *ANEP*, 129 (no. 371), 154 (no. 447). The gesture here could also be seen as Palms Sideways. In either case, this does not accord with Levantine iconography during this period (although Palms In and Palms Sideways are attested during the Bronze Age; see section 4.7). It is possible that the Assyrian artist performatively imposed on these foreign captives a gesture that would indicate submission for an Assyrian audience. The same may also be true of Egyptian artists portraying foreigners doing the Palms Out gesture before the Egyptian Pharaoh, except that in this case, the gesture agrees with what is found in similar contexts in the Levant.

³⁹⁷ Evidence could, perhaps, be cited from Bronze Age Levantine cylinder seals or from Aramaic stamp seals of the Iron Age, which contain gestures that could be matched to Gruber's schema (see section 4.7 below). However, the Bronze Age sources are too early for direct links to the Hebrew Bible, and the Aramaic seals are properly Mesopotamian except for the use of the Aramaic script. Further, two-handed gestures other than Palms Out are very limited in their distribution, while Palms Out is consistently, frequently, and widely attested in Levantine iconography (like descriptions of prayer with raised hands in textual sources). In order for Gruber's approach to hold, one would have to understand (Egypto-)Levantine iconography as essentially alien to Northwest Semitic ritual practice as reflected in texts (the latter being assumed to have stronger ties to Mesopotamia). This scenario seems unlikely to us in view of the adaptation of iconographic motifs and the use of these motifs over a wide geographical and chronological span.

³⁹⁸ Keel, *Symbolism*, 312-13. Compare Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, trans. Rosemary Sheed (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1958), 370-71, on the concept of “gestures of approach.”

³⁹⁹ Keel, *Symbolism*, 312-13 with fig. 417a; Othmar Keel, *Wirkmächtige Siegeszeichen im Alten Testament: Ikonographische Studien zu Jos 8:18-26; Ex 17:8-13; 2 Kön 13:14-19 und 1 Kön 22:11* (OBO 5; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1974), 91-109. Whereas Keel understands the gesture in Exodus 17:11-12 as a raising of both hands, we argue in section 2.2.7 of the present study that it is preferable to understand the gesture as using only one hand (in accordance with the reading of the received biblical text).

according to Keel is that of “protection, blessing, and praise.” In this connection, Keel cites the ivory pyxis from Hazor (PLU [90]) and an Egyptian scene from the temple of Seti I at Abydos. He links the Hazor pyxis with the phrase *nʿśwʿ yodayim* “lift up the hands” in Psalm 134:2.⁴⁰⁰ The third function that Keel ascribes to Palms Out is that of petitionary prayer. Here Keel cites an Egyptian relief from the tomb of Horemheb, which shows Levantine and other non-Egyptian people performing Palms Out, and he links this image to Psalms 28:2; 88:10; 143:6; and 1 Kings 8:54, in which the basic gesture phrases are *nʿśwʿ yodayim*, *šittah kappayim*, *perasʿ yodayim*, and *perasʿ kappayim* respectively.⁴⁰¹ Thus Keel combines examples of Palms Out with Northwest Semitic gesture phrases belonging to three contextual types (destruction, blessing, and petition); his categorization is similar to Gruber’s in distinguishing between blessing/worship and petition/entreaty, except that the basis for the distinction is context rather than the gesture itself. Others, such as Menahem Haran and David Burke, also draw connections between images of Palms Out and biblical passages describing the raising of hands in prayer, although the gesture’s functions are not as fully articulated as in Keel’s work.⁴⁰²

The connections drawn by Keel and others who employ the same approach have the advantage of accounting for the close affinity between Egyptian and Levantine ritual gestures as represented in iconography. We have seen other examples of this close affinity in this chapter, particularly in the cases of Palm Out and Palm In. However, a major disadvantage of previous studies that follow this approach is the haphazard way in which they draw connections between the artistic and textual sources. The connections are apparently thought to be self-evident and are therefore assumed rather than argued for. Considering that there are contrary views, such as

⁴⁰⁰ Keel, *Symbolism*, 314-16 with figs. 421-22.

⁴⁰¹ Keel, *Symbolism*, 320-21 with fig. 429. The relief from the tomb of Horemheb is discussed below in section 4.6.6.2.

⁴⁰² Burke, “Gesture,” 450; Haran, “Bas-Reliefs,” 23-24.

those of Gruber, it will not do to simply assume the identity of a gesture portrayed in a given iconographic scene with another mentioned in a biblical verse.

In the following contextual synthesis, we seek to demonstrate that the Palms Out gesture in Levantine iconography is to be identified with a cluster of gesture phrases appearing in literature in contexts of prayer and entreaty. These phrases include *נָסָוּ יָדָיִם (+adv)_{prayer}* “lift up the hands (+adv)_{prayer}” and its synonyms (discussed in section 3.3.2). While this basically agrees with the connections drawn by Keel and those who follow his approach, the connections are here established through a careful examination of context and are more fully elaborated.

4.6.6.1. Setting

The iconographic sources that indicate a setting for the Palms Out gesture associate it with rituals enacted on sacred space. Both the Ahiram sarcophagus and the bowl PLU (57) show a ritual presentation of offerings to a figure who sits enthroned behind an offering table. The ivory IM 65299 also shows a ritual presentation of offerings, though the recipient of the offerings is missing in this case. The stamp seal IAA 73-157 shows an altar or offering table immediately before the one performing Palms Out, and the stamp seals IAA 73-38 and IAA 73-183 may show incense stands; the presence of these installations, like the offering tables in the Ahiram sarcophagus and in PLU (57), would imply a temple setting. Finally, the cylinder seals Ashmolean 1933.1692 and PLU (93), in which the agent of Palms Out stands behind a seated figure, show an audience scene in which another figure approaches the seated one.

Among the textual examples of raising both hands in prayer, several include information about the location in which the hands are raised. As with the examples from iconography, the location in the majority of cases is a temple. In Psalm 134:2, priests who serve in the temple

precincts are called upon (in a poetic apostrophe) to pray with raised hands toward the sanctuary. Solomon offers a dedicatory prayer with raised hands at the temple before the altar of Yahweh (1 Kings 8:22, 54; 2 Chronicles 6:12-13). The addressees of Isaiah's prophecy in Isaiah 1:15 are said to offer prayer with uplifted hands, accompanied by offerings, in the temple courts during festivals (compare verses 11-14). Finally, in Ezra 9:5, Ezra offers a prayer to Yahweh with raised hands at the temple (compare Ezra 10:1). Other locations mentioned in the textual examples are the royal palace (Rites for the Vintage, *KTU* 1.41 55), the area outside the gate of an Egyptian city (Exodus 9:29, 33), and a public square near the Water Gate in Jerusalem (Nehemiah 8:6).⁴⁰³ Overall, the evidence for the setting in the textual examples agrees with the iconographic examples of Palms Out.

4.6.6.2. Inscriptions

Unfortunately, no examples of Palms Out in Levantine iconography bear an inscription that relates to the gesture. The Ahirom sarcophagus bears an inscription, but this does not relate to the ritual scene and gesture displayed on the side of the sarcophagus. Seals showing Palms Out are often inscribed with the name of the seal owner, but again, these inscriptions are practically irrelevant to the analysis of the gesture. This means that information that would otherwise be gained from inscriptions must be guessed at on the basis of comparative evidence. It is fortunate that the comparative evidence in this case is abundant.

⁴⁰³ The location of Kirta's prayer with uplifted hands to 'Ilu and Ba'lu (*KTU* 1.14 ii 22-23, iv 5) is somewhat ambiguous. The text describes Kirta ascending to the top of a tower (*mgdl*) and mounting the shoulder of a wall (*hmt*). These terms might be understood as referring to the city wall; this interpretation is made clear, for example, in the translation of Edward L. Greenstein in *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry*, ed. Simon B. Parker (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1997), 14, 18. However, the Ugaritic word *mgdl* may also refer to a temple structure (*DULAT*, 2:530). Although the Ugaritic word *hmt* and its Hebrew cognate *ḥo^wmō^h* usually refer to a city wall, *ḥo^wmō^h* may more rarely refer to the wall of a building (BDB, 327, sub *ḥo^wmō^h*, definition 2). The fact that the prayer is accompanied by a sacrifice also supports the idea that the location is a temple. However, the evidence is not strong enough for a conclusive argument on this point.

As mentioned above, the Palms Out gesture is widely attested in ancient Egyptian iconography. It also features in the hieroglyphic writing system, in which standing and kneeling figures performing this gesture serve as determinatives for words having to do with prayer: *dw3* “adore,” *i3w* “praise,” *sw3š* “extol,” and *tw3* “entreat.”⁴⁰⁴ Captions above figures performing this gesture typically refer unambiguously to the gesture’s function, using the terms *dw3* “adore” or *i3w* “praise” (with the determinatives in these words matching the gesture referred to in the caption).⁴⁰⁵ The words associated with Palms Out in Egyptian writing and iconography compare well with the Hebrew words that are structurally aligned with *nśśw* *ʿyodayim* (+*adv*)_{prayer} “lift up the hands (+*adv*)_{prayer}” and its synonyms. The most common word that is structurally aligned with these phrases is *təpillə*^h “prayer” (1 Kings 8:38, 54; Isaiah 1:15; Psalms 88:10, 14; 141:2). Some others are *berak* “bless” (Psalms 63:5; 134:2), *šibbaḥ* “laud, praise” (Psalm 63:5), *hillel* “praise” (Psalm 63:5), *təhinno*^h “supplication” (1 Kings 8:38, 54), and *təḥ^anu^wni^ym* “supplications” (Psalm 28:2).⁴⁰⁶

Some particularly interesting Egyptian examples are New Kingdom reliefs and tomb paintings in which Asiatic people and other non-Egyptians address the Pharaoh using the Palms Out gesture. Since these examples tend to portray all non-Egyptians in exactly the same poses and making similar speeches, caution must be exercised in using these examples as evidence of Northwest Semitic practice. However, the main value of these examples is in the extensive descriptions of the foreigners’ actions and in the speech attributed to them that relates to the Palms Out gesture. In addition, some of these examples show the foreigners in procession,

⁴⁰⁴ Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar*, 442, 445 (nos. A4, A30); cf. Wilkinson, *Reading Egyptian Art*, 28-29; Faulkner, 295, sub *tw3* “put a claim, claim from, appeal to.”

⁴⁰⁵ See Hellmuth Müller, “Darstellungen von Gebärden auf Denkmälern des alten Reiches,” *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Abteilung Kairo* 7 (1937): 93-94; Emma Brunner-Traut, “Gesten,” in *Lexikon der Ägyptologie* 2 (1977), cols. 575, 577-78; Dominicus, *Gesten und Gebärden*, 25-36; Mahmoud El-Khadragy, “The Adoration Gesture in Private Tombs up to the Early Middle Kingdom,” *Studien zur Altägyptischen Kultur* 29 (2001): 187-201.

⁴⁰⁶ For a more thorough discussion of words structurally aligned with these gesture phrases, see section 3.3.2.

bearing offerings and facing the Pharaoh (who is sometimes enthroned); these aspects make them especially appropriate for comparison with the Levantine examples that show the procession scene. Thus we view these examples primarily in terms of their comparative potential rather than as direct witnesses to Northwest Semitic practice, although the fact that they portray Northwest Semitic people makes their degree of accuracy as direct witnesses a matter of interest.

One of these examples is a painting in the tomb of Menkheperresonb, a high priest of Amun under Thutmose III (1479-1425 BCE).⁴⁰⁷ The painting, in two registers, shows the chiefs of foreign lands⁴⁰⁸ and others bearing tribute as they approach the Pharaoh, who is seated in his baldachin. The chiefs in the procession who are furthest from the Pharaoh are in a standing posture and have both hands full of offerings, while the next-closest, who are also standing, have an offering in one hand and raise the other in Palm Out. The next-closest kneel and raise both hands in Palms Out. Finally, those at the front of the procession prostrate themselves with their faces to the ground. An inscription above the procession reads as follows:

*rdit i3w n nb t3.wy sn-t3 n ntr nfr in wr.w n.w t3 nb sw3š=sn nht hm=f in=sn hr
psd.w=sn m ht nb(.t) n t3-ntr ḥd nbw ḥsbd mfk3t ʕ3.t nb(.t) šps.t sb.tw rdit n=sn t3w
n ʕnh*

Giving praise to the Lord of the Two Lands, prostration⁴⁰⁹ to the beautiful god by the chiefs of every land as they extol the might of his majesty, bringing on their backs some of every product of the god's land—silver, gold, lapis lazuli, turquoise, and every costly gemstone, seeking⁴¹⁰ that the breath of life might be granted them.

⁴⁰⁷ Davies, TTS 5, 2-9, pls. 3-7; *ANEP*, 15-16, 255-56 (nos. 45, 48).

⁴⁰⁸ The chiefs near the front of the procession are identified in hieroglyphic inscriptions above or in front of them, but the identification in some cases does not match the figure's features. One who kneels and performs the Palms Out gesture, for example, is identified as the chief of Hatti, but he is depicted as a Northwest Semite, with a characteristic beard, fillet, and kilt. See *ANEP*, 255.

⁴⁰⁹ Literally, "kissing the earth."

⁴¹⁰ For *sb.tw* "in quest of" or "seeking that...might be granted," see Gardiner, *Grammar*, §181; Faulkner, 219. It is uncertain whether the Egyptian idiom implies that a specific request was uttered; the translation employed by Davies, TTS 5, 3, "in the hope that vital breath may be accorded to them," would assume that this nuance is not present.

Here the Palms Out gesture is described by the phrase *rdi.t i3w* “giving of praise” and the verb *sw3š* “extol,” both of which have the determinative showing a man standing and performing Palms Out. The last clause of this inscription, *sb.tw rdi.t n=sn t3w n ʿnh* “seeking that the breath of life might be granted them,” may be compared with Lamentations 2:19: *śə ʿiʿ ʿeləw kappayik ʿal-nepes ʿoʿləlayik* “lift up your palms to him for the life of your children.” In other examples in literature, the gesture of lifting the hands is often performed in the context of deperate need or appeal (Kirta, *KTU* 1.14 ii 22-23, iv 5; Zakkur, *KAI* 202 A:11; pAmherst 63 ix 17-19; 1 Kings 8:38; Isaiah 1:15; Jeremiah 4:31; Psalms 28:2; 63:5; 88:10; 141:2; 143:6).

A similar painting is found in the tomb of Huy, who lived in the time of Tutankhamun (1336-1327 BCE).⁴¹¹ In this painting, four registers show groups of Asiatic men approaching the seated Pharaoh, bearing offerings. The men at the front of the procession, whose hands are free of offerings, are in three poses: (1) standing and performing Palms Out, (2) prostrating with the head raised and the hands in Palms Out, and (3) prostrating with the hands and face to the ground. Above the men is an inscription which reads as follows:

wr.w n.w rtnw hr.t hm.w kmt dr rk ntr hr dbh htp hr hm=f dd=sn imi n=n t3w n dd=k k3 sdd=n nht.w=k nn wn bšt3.w m h3=k t3 nb m htp

Chiefs of Upper Retenu, ignorant of Egypt since the primordial era, begging for favor from his majesty, saying: “Give us the breath that you give, so that we will recount your victories, there being no rebellions in your time, every land being at peace.”

Here the phrase *dbh htp.w* “begging for favor” is an interpretation of the actions performed by the Asiatic men, including the Palms Out gesture and the accompanying speech. The Hebrew words for supplication associated with the lifting of hands (*təhinnəʿ*^h “supplication” in 1 Kings

⁴¹¹ Davies, TTS 4, 28-30, pls. 19-20; *ANEP*, 17, 256 (no. 52).

8:38, 54, and *tah^anu^wni^vm* “supplications” in Psalm 28:2) are suitable semantic parallels for the Egyptian phrase.⁴¹²

In the tomb of Horemheb at Saqqara (ca. 1295 BCE) is a stone relief depicting a scene from Horemheb’s service as military commander.⁴¹³ The scene shows a group of non-Egyptians (including some Northwest Semites as well as some from African regions) who perform the Palms Out gesture in various poses. Some stand with the arms spread apart, while others kneel or prostrate themselves with the arms fully extended. To the left of this group stands an unnamed Egyptian official, to the left of the official stands the general Horemheb, and to the left of Horemheb are the Pharaoh and his wife in standing posture. The figures from right to left are progressively larger, creating a diagonal line from the foreigners’ gaze to the Pharaoh. As indicated in the inscription next to Horemheb, the scene depicts these foreigners supplicating the Pharaoh through the mediation of the unnamed official and of Horemheb. The inscription reports Horemheb’s speech to the Pharaoh:

⁴¹² It may be noteworthy that the Egyptian phrase *dbht-htp*, which is similar to the phrase here, refers to a funerary meal consisting of offerings, as well as to an offering table on which the meal is placed. See *WÄS*, 5:440-41; Faulkner, 312. Although the scene in the tomb of Huy clearly does not depict a funerary offering, there may be an underlying connection between the ritual of presenting offerings before the Pharaoh (accompanied by the Palms Out gesture and a verbal plea for favor) and other kinds of offerings described by the word *dbh*. On the Ahiram sarcophagus, which depicts the presentation of offerings for a funerary meal, members of the procession perform the Palms Out gesture, like the members of the procession approaching the Pharaoh in the Huy tomb painting, particularly in the performance of the Palms Out gesture. Unfortunately, there is no way of knowing how an ancient Phoenician viewing the sarcophagus would have described the scene. However, the offering ritual in which Kirta lifts his hands to Ba’lu (*KTU* 1.14 ii 22-23, iv 5) is described by forms of the Ugaritic word *dbh* “sacrifice”: Kirta takes a “lamb of sacrifice” (*imr dbh*) and a “bird of sacrifice” (*’sr dbh*) to offer in the ritual (*KTU* 1.14 iii 55-59), and the gesture phrase *nša ydh* “he lifted up his hands” is parallel to the verb *dbh* in the following colon (*KTU* 1.14 iv 4-6). Isaiah 1:11-15 also mentions the lifting of hands in the context of festival offerings described as *zəbōhivm* “sacrifices.” The Ugaritic and Hebrew words are cognate, deriving from a Semitic root **dbh* “sacrifice.” Although the Semitic phoneme /d/ does not regularly correspond to Egyptian /d/, it is not out of the question that the two words are related (either as irregular cognates or as a very ancient loanword), perhaps with the notion of “sacrifice (in order to obtain favor)” widening in Egyptian to “beg.” Thus a ritual consisting of presenting offerings, performing the Palms Out gesture, and uttering a verbal plea for favor, the whole being described by the word *dbh*, may be a very ancient Egypto-Semitic legacy. Nevertheless, in the absence of direct substantiation, we can only put this forward as an interesting possibility.

⁴¹³ P. A. A. Boeser, *Die Denkmäler des neuen Reiches*, vol. 1 (Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1911), 7, pls. 23-24; *ANET*, 251; *ANEP*, 2, 250 (no. 5); Geoffrey Thorndike Martin, *The Memphite Tomb of Horemheb, Commander-in-Chief of Tut’ankhamūn*, vol. 1: The Reliefs, Inscriptions, and Commentary (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1989), 94-97, pls. 110A-115.

*iw wr.w n.w ḥ3st nb r dbḥ ʿnh ḥr=f in r-p^c(t) smr w^c.ty sš nsw ḥr-m-ḥb m3^c-ḥrw
dd=f wšb=f [nsw ḥ3s.wt] ḥm.w kmt iw=w ḥr rd.wy=k r nḥḥ dt wd st n=k imn...*

The chiefs of every foreign land come to beg for life from him by means of the hereditary prince, the sole companion, the royal scribe Horemheb, justified, who says as he reports to [the king: “As for the foreign lands] who are ignorant of Egypt, they are under your feet forever and ever; Amun has decreed them to you...”

Again, we note that the action of the Asiatic men and other non-Egyptians is described by the word *dbḥ* “beg.”

In a wall relief of king Seti I at Karnak, a scene shows Phoenician men felling cedars, and to their right, another group of Phoenician men standing and kneeling, facing right, in Palms Out.⁴¹⁴ To the right of the gesturing men is an Egyptian official, and to his right is the Pharaoh, who stands, facing left. Above the Phoenician men who perform the Palms Out gesture is an inscription that describes their action:

*wr.w ʿ3.w n.w rmnn dd=sn m dw3 nb t3.wy m s^c3 pḥty=f m3.tw=k mi it=k r^c
ʿnh=tw n ptr=k*

The great chiefs of Lebanon, who say in adoration of the Lord of the Two Lands, in the magnifying of his might: “You appear like your father Re, one lives by seeing you.”

Here the Phoenician chiefs’ communicative act, consisting of the Palms Out gesture and an utterance, is described with the words *dw3* “adore” and *s^c3* “magnify.” The word *dw3* is followed by the determinative of a standing figure performing Palms Out, making the connection to the gesture clear.

⁴¹⁴ ANEP, 108, 110, 287-88 (nos. 327, 331); The Epigraphic Survey, *The Battle Reliefs of King Sety I* (Chicago: The Oriental Institute, 1986), 28-34, pl. 10.

At Medinet Habu, a relief of Ramses III shows the Syrian town of Amurru under attack by the Pharaoh.⁴¹⁵ This scene belongs to a large class of New Kingdom reliefs depicting the storming of Levantine cities; this class of reliefs has been studied in detail by several scholars.⁴¹⁶ This one from Medinet Habu, however, is especially interesting because of the inscription, which attributes to the defenders words that are similar to those of the Asiatics approaching the pharaoh in the scenes described above. Among the defenders on the walls of Amurru is one who stands and performs Palms Out, facing the enormous Pharaoh who attacks from the left (in other examples of this type of scene, many or all of the people on the top of the wall perform Palms Out). Another of the men on the wall holds a brazier in one hand and raises the other hand in a gesture that resembles the later Mediterranean gesture known as the *mano cornuta* (“horn-shaped hand”).⁴¹⁷ There is some ambiguity here, perhaps purposeful on the part of the Egyptian artist, as to whether these gestures of the men on the wall are directed to the Pharaoh or to a Northwest Semitic god such as Ba‘lu.⁴¹⁸ Indeed, the Pharaoh himself is described in an inscription above him as being like Ba‘lu.⁴¹⁹ An inscription above the men on the wall relates their speech addressed to the Pharaoh:

⁴¹⁵ The Epigraphic Survey, *Later Historical Records of Ramses III, Medinet Habu*, vol. 2 (OIP 9; Chicago: Oriental Institute, 1932), pls. 94-96; W. F. Edgerton and John A. Wilson, *Historical Records of Ramses III* (SAOC 12; Chicago: Oriental Institute, 1936), 100-102; *ANEP*, 117, 290 (no. 346).

⁴¹⁶ P. Derchain, “Les plus anciens témoignages de sacrifices d’enfants chez les sémites occidentaux,” *VT* 20 (1970): 351-55; Othmar Keel, “Kanaanäische Sühneriten auf ägyptischen Tempelreliefs,” *VT* 25 (1975): 413-69; Anthony J. Spalinger, “A Canaanite Ritual Found in Egyptian Reliefs,” *JSSEA* 8/1 (1977): 47-60; V. A. Donohue, “A Gesture of Submission,” in *Studies in Pharaonic Religion and Society in Honour of J. Gwyn Griffiths*, ed. Alan B. Lloyd (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1992), 82-114.

⁴¹⁷ G. A. Wainwright, “The Earliest Use of the Mano Cornuta,” *Folklore* 72 (1961): 492-95.

⁴¹⁸ Spalinger, “Canaanite Ritual,” 54-55, argues, contrary to previous interpreters, that the Canaanite ritual depicted in these scenes involves calling upon Ba‘lu to deliver the city from the attacking army; he cites in this connection *KTU* 1.119 26-36, which describes a rite for calling upon Ba‘lu when the city is attacked. However, Donohue, “Gesture of Submission,” 86-87, speaks of a transformation from an originally apotropaic rite aimed at repelling the attackers to one of propitiation expressing submission to the attackers, with the Pharaoh acknowledged as “the proper object of [the Levantines’] native liturgy.”

⁴¹⁹ This part of the inscription reads: *hnhmt=f [mi bʿ]r hr tp-dw.w* “his war-cry is [like Ba]al on the mountains.” Edgerton and Wilson restore the name of the deity based on the partially visible Seth-animal determinative and on a parallel text; see Edgerton and Wilson, *Historical Records*, 100.

*dd mdw in p3 wr [hsy n] dmit 'a-mu-ru [hn^c] mhwt=f [m-b3h] hk3 nfr nty mi ki
[n ...] imi n=n p3 t3[w n ^cnh] ssny=n sw hr [sdd] b3w=k n s3 n s3=n sh3=k [...]*

Words spoken by the [vile] chief [of] the city of Amurru [and] his kinspeople [in the presence of] the good ruler who is like the form [of ...]: “Give us the br[eath of life], that we may breathe it, [relat]ing your power to our grandchildren, your memory [...].”

The Palms Out gesture is not described in this instance, but the accompanying speech is precisely in line with the evidence noted above of entreaty or supplicatory prayer accompanying the gesture.

Therefore, the inscriptions accompanying Egyptian depictions of Palms Out are closely parallel to descriptive words and speech in Northwest Semitic texts. Although caution should be exercised in comparing the data from these separate cultures, the Egyptian inscriptions associated with Palms Out provide some support (in lieu of inscribed Levantine examples) for the connection between the Levantine gesture of Palms Out and the cluster of gesture phrases including *נָסַח* *yodayim (+adv)*_{prayer}.

4.6.6.3. Connections to Events in Textual Sources

To our knowledge, not a single one of the examples of Palms Out in Levantine iconography has been thought to depict a specific event mentioned in texts. Relevant to this issue, however, is a large study on victory gestures by Othmar Keel, *Wirkmächtige Siegeszeichen im Alten Testament*, in which he relates the gesture of Moses in Exodus 17:11-12 to the Palms Out gesture as it occurs in Egyptian iconography. According to Keel’s theory, Moses’ gesture originates in an Egyptian scene attested in reliefs, in which a person is shown praising the Pharaoh with the Palms Out gesture while the Pharaoh smites enemies. This scene was

misinterpreted by the biblical authors, who assumed the Palms Out gesture actually empowered the one who was smiting; thus, in Exodus 17, Moses raises his hands to empower Joshua as the latter smites the Amalekites.⁴²⁰ Although this theory is a creative way of relating this biblical text to iconographic sources, we find the theory to be somewhat speculative and improbable. Based on our systematic comparison of gesture phrases and on the evidence from Levantine iconography, it seems unlikely that an ancient Israelite would have understood Palms Out as a gesture that effects victory in battle or, conversely, would have intended the description in Exodus 17:11-12 to evoke the Palms Out gesture.

Therefore, Palms Out is not associated with any single event that can be located in both a textual and an iconographic source. Indeed, this is not very surprising. If Palms Out is associated with low-status agents and repeating ritual events, then we would not expect a given agent or event to be memorialized in more than one source. This is unlike Fist Up, for which the divine agent and mythic events are worthy of appearance in multiple sources.

4.6.6.4. Target

The targets of the Palms Out gesture attested in Northwest Semitic art may be listed as follows:

⁴²⁰ Keel, *Wirkmächtige Siegeszeichen*, 95-109, 139-140, with illustration nos. 51-53. Keel posits that the locus of the tradition preserved in Exodus 17:8-16 was the Negev, close to where examples of the Egyptian scene are attested. According to Keel, this passage in its original version described Moses raising both hands and did not include a reference to Moses holding the rod in his hand; Keel ascribes the singular “his hand” (*ydw*) in verse 11 and the phrase “with the rod of God in my hand” in verse 9 to the E source, which tries to connect this scene with Moses’ smiting of the rock with his rod in Exodus 17:3-6. See especially Keel, *Wirkmächtige Siegeszeichen*, 108.

plant motif	<u>ivories</u> : Birmingham 124'61, BM 132918, BM 2011.6001.448, BM 2011.6001.487, BM 2011.6001.690, IM 61873, IM 61894, IM 62501, IM 62729, IM 62767, IM 65181, IM 65354, IM 72082, IM NN (12), IM NN (13), IM NN (14), IM NN (15), IM NN (18), IM NN (19), MMA 60.145.2, MMA 61.197.2, MMA 67.22.3, PLU (90), PLU (92); <u>cylinder seals</u> : Damascus 2715, Damascus 2898. Total: 26.
figure poised to slay target	<u>ivories</u> : Ugarit ivory panel A3, PLU (91); <u>bowls</u> : BM Cat. of Bronzes 186, Louvre AO 20134, MMA 74.51.4556, PMPP Dutuit 170, RMVG 61574. Total: 7.
standing deity	<u>relief</u> : Balu'a stela; <u>ivories</u> : Ugarit ivory panel A1 (cf. panel A6); <u>axe head</u> : Beirut 4046. Total: 3.
facing seated figure	<u>relief</u> : Ahiram sarcophagus; <u>bowls</u> : PLU (57). Total: 2.
back of seated figure	<u>cylinder seals</u> : Ashmolean 1933.1692, PLU (93). Total: 2.
djed column	<u>ivories</u> : BM 2011.6001.705, IM 74833. Total: 2.
winged scarab	<u>stamp seals</u> : HebU 734; <u>bowls</u> : BM 123053. Total: 2.
four-winged being with animal head	<u>stamp seals</u> : Ashmolean 1914.57 (Underside). Total: 1.
long procession of deities	<u>bowls</u> : Calabria NN. Total: 1.
cartouche (?)	<u>ivories</u> : IM 65299. Total: 1.

Clearly, the most significant target for the Palms Out gesture, at least in terms of frequency, is the plant motif. The plant motif that serves as the target of Palms Out, though sometimes unrecognizable as a specific floral species, typically belongs to one of two types recognizable elsewhere in iconography: a stylized lotus or a stylized date palm. Both of these types may function as symbols of deity. The lotus commonly features in Egyptian iconography as a symbol of the sun, suggesting a connection either with the Egyptian sun god Re or with his Northwest Semitic counterpart Shapshu/Shamash.⁴²¹ Similarly, the date palm in Levantine iconography

⁴²¹ Cf. Wilkinson, *Reading Egyptian Art*, 120-21. Also relevant for its examples, though outdated in some respects, is William H. Goodyear, *The Grammar of the Lotus: A New History of Classic Ornament as a Development of Sun*

functions as a symbol of the goddess Athiratu/Asherah.⁴²² This symbolism accords with other targets of the Palms Out gesture that are unequivocally deities, such as the male deity on the Balu‘a stela and the nude goddess on the ivory panel from Ugarit.

In almost all examples of *nʿśw’ yʿdayim* (+adv)_{prayer} “lift up the hands (+adv)_{prayer}” and its synonyms, the target of the gesture is a deity, who is either explicitly named as Target in the gesture phrase itself or clearly indicated as the recipient of the gesture in the surrounding text. The examples in the Hebrew Bible, of course, usually have Yahweh as the deity. The only two exceptions are found in the Psalms: Psalm 44:21-22, which mentions spreading the palms (*pʿras kappayim*) to foreign deities; and Psalm 119:48, where the Target of the Psalmist’s gesture is Yahweh’s commandments (perhaps a metonymy for Yahweh himself). In the Ugaritic epic of Kirta (*KTU* 1.14 ii 22-23, iv 5), the surrounding text indicates the gods ‘Ilu and Ba‘lu as recipients of Kirta’s gesture. In the Aramaic inscription of Zakkur, the Target (explicitly mentioned in the gesture phrase) is the god B‘el-shmayn. This agrees with the majority of examples in art, in which the target is either a deity or a symbol of a deity. The only type of target that is frequently attested in art but that has no explicit parallel in texts is the figure poised to slay the target. In this case, however, one can compare Jeremiah 4:31, in which the personified “daughter of Zion” cries out while spreading her palms, “Woe is me, for my soul is thirsty because of murderers!” Although the target of her gesture is not given (Yahweh may be an implied target), the general sense of desperate entreaty in the face of impending destruction is similar.

Worship (London: Sampson Low, Marston and Company, 1891), 5-9. Goodyear argues that the lotus consistently appears as a symbol of the sun god, not only in Egypt but throughout the ancient world.

⁴²² King and Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel*, 103-4; cf. BDB, 81. One may also compare the use of the sycamore motif in Egyptian iconography, the tree being a manifestation of the goddesses Nut, Isis, and Hathor: see Wilkinson, *Reading Egyptian Art*, 116-17; Keel, *Symbolism*, 186-87.

4.6.6.5. Instrument

In the Palms Out gesture, both hands are open, vertical, and facing outward, which precludes the possibility of an instrument being held in the hands. (Indeed, it has been suggested that this is part of the gesture's symbolism; see chapter 5). The same may be true for the textual examples of raising the hands in prayer. Some of the phrases referring to this gesture describe the hands being "spread" (*p̄ras̄* or the corresponding D stem *peras̄*), which could indicate that the hands are held open (see section 4.6.6.7 below). In any case, none of the textual examples mention an Instrument in connection with this gesture.

4.6.6.6. Agent

The various types of agents of the Palm Out gesture in Levantine art are summarized in the following list. Examples in which the gender or posture of the agent is uncertain are excluded from this list. Also, two identical agents flanking a central target are counted as one instance of that type of agent, since this is a purely iconographic feature that has no analogue in texts, and since it does not serve to mark a distinct contextual type (at least in the case of the Palms Out gesture).

standing male with crown	<u>relief</u> : Balu'a stela; <u>bowls</u> : Calabria NN. Total: 2.
standing male without crown	<u>ivories</u> : Ugarit ivory panel A6, BM 2011.6001.690, BM 2011.6001.705, IM 74833; <u>cylinder seals</u> : Damascus 2715, Damascus 2898; <u>stamp seals</u> : Ashmolean 1914.57 (Underside), Haifa H-1932, IAA 73-157, PBN M 6456, PBN M 6761 (Side A), PML 284; <u>bowls</u> : PLU (57). Total: 13.
standing male in procession	<u>relief</u> : Ahiram sarcophagus; <u>ivories</u> : IM 65299. Total: 2.
kneeling male with falcon head and crown	<u>ivories</u> : IM 65354, MMA 60.145.2; <u>bowls</u> : BM 123053. Total: 3.

kneeling male with crown	<u>ivories</u> : Birmingham 124'61, BM 2011.6001.448, BM 2011.6001.487, IM 61894, IM 62501, IM 62729, IM 62767, IM 65181, IM 65349; <u>stamp seals</u> : IAA 68.35.197. Total: 10.
bare-headed kneeling male	<u>ivories</u> : BM 132942, BM 2011.6001.393, BM 2011.6001.606, BM 2011.6001.634, IM 61891, IM 65346, IM 65355, IM 65376, IM 65377, IM 65400, IM NN (12), IM NN (16), PLU (90); <u>stamp seals</u> : HebU 734, PBN Chabouillet 1050/3 (= M 8536); <u>axe head</u> : Beirut 4046. Total: 16.
standing female with crown	<u>cylinder seals</u> : Ashmolean 1933.1692. Total: 1.
kneeling female with crown	<u>scarabs</u> : IAA 60-517. Total: 1.
covering male captive(s)	<u>ivories</u> : Ugarit ivory panel A3, PLU (91); <u>bowls</u> : BM Cat. of Bronzes 186, Louvre AO 20134, MMA 74.51.4556, PMPP Dutuit 170, RMVG 61574. Total: 7.
couchant sphinx or griffin	<u>ivories</u> : BM 132918, BM 2011.6001.340, IM 61873, IM 72082, IM NN (17)-(20), MMA 61.197.2, MMA 67.22.3, UPenn 65.3.3, PLU (92). Total: 12.

Among the examples in which the agent has a human form (i.e., excluding the category of the couchant sphinx or griffin, whose relationship to human practice is uncertain), there are four main variables that come into play: (1) whether the agent is male or female, (2) the agent's rank, (3) the agent's posture, and (4) whether or not the agent is part of a group in procession. We discuss each of these variables in turn, comparing them with what can be gleaned from the textual examples of raising the hands in prayer.

Out of fifty-five examples in iconography in which the agent of Palms Out is human, only two show a female agent. This indicates a clear predominance of male agents in the performing of this gesture. The twenty-five textual examples of raising both hands in prayer include three that clearly describe a lone female agent performing the gesture: pAmherst 63 ix 17-19; Jeremiah 4:31; and Lamentations 2:19. The example from Papyrus Amherst describes a widow performing the gesture. In the two biblical examples, the agent is the "daughter of Zion" (Jeremiah 4:31) or the "wall of the daughter of Zion" (Lamentations 2:19), both being

personifications of Jerusalem and its inhabitants; however, the surrounding context in these two examples describes behavior that is viewed elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible as stereotypically female, and Jeremiah 4:31 explicitly casts the agent as a woman in travail, making it clear that the Palms Out gesture is associated with a woman's nonverbal behavior and not with the inhabitants in general. In addition, Nehemiah 8:6 refers to a group performing the gesture, and the group explicitly consists of both men and women (see verse 3). Two other passages refer to a group of agents of Palms Out that may include females (Psalm 44:21-22; Lamentations 3:41). In none of these cases does the text indicate what proportion of the group were men and what proportion were women. To summarize these data, women appear more frequently in the textual examples than in art, yet both kinds of sources are similar in that the agent may be male or (more rarely) female.

The rank of a figure in Levantine iconography is somewhat more difficult to assess than the gender. One might assume that figures wearing crowns are generally of higher rank than those who are bare-headed; however, this is not a sure indicator, as we have seen that kings are not always depicted wearing crowns. The rank of the human figures in these pieces ranges from the falcon-headed figure wearing a crown (who is either a god or a symbolic representation of a king) to the cowering captive (who is effectively devoid of rank, no matter what his rank was prior to being vanquished). This basically parallels the distribution of the Agent's rank in texts mentioning raising the hands in the context of prayer. In many examples in texts, the Agent is a king: king Kirta (*KTU* 1.14 ii 22-23, iv 5), the king of Ugarit (*KTU* 1.41 55), king Zakkur (*KAI* 202 A:11), or king Solomon (1 Kings 8:22, 54; 2 Chronicles 6:12-13). Other high-ranking personages sometimes perform the gesture, including religious leaders like Moses (Exodus 9:29, 33) and Ezra (Ezra 9:5) as well as priests (Psalm 134:2). Although the textual sources do not

provide clear examples of cowering captives raising their hands as they are about to be smitten, the threatened, desperate Agents of the gesture in Jeremiah 4:31 and Lamentations 2:19; 3:41 are similar enough to maintain the comparison.

The posture of the agent of Palms Out in art may be standing, kneeling, or cowering. Standing and kneeling are the most frequent postures and are about equal in the number of attestations, while cowering is less frequent (only seven examples, all in the circumscribed context of a victorious figure about to smite a captive). In contrast to the one-handed gestures Palm Out, Palm In, and Palm Sideways, the agent of Palms Out is never seated. The range of postures for Palms Out underscores the generally low status of the agent. Textual examples of raising the hands in prayer are in harmony with these data for the Palms Out gesture in art. Four textual examples include information about the posture of the Agent, which may be standing or kneeling, with two attestations for each posture. The people in Nehemiah 8:6 stand as they raise their hands (see verse 5), as do the priests addressed in Psalm 134:2. King Solomon kneels to pray with uplifted hands in 1 Kings 8:54 (= 2 Chronicles 6:13), and Ezra also assumes the kneeling posture in Ezra 9:5.⁴²³ The description of king Solomon kneeling while lifting his hands compares particularly well with the kneeling figure who wears the Double Crown in the Nimrud ivories, who is also presumably a king.

Finally, two examples in art show the agent as part of a procession bringing offerings to a central figure or symbol. These examples match what is described in Isaiah 1:12-15. Here

⁴²³ D. R. Ap-Thomas, in his article "Notes on Some Terms Relating to Prayer," *VT* 6 (1956): 225-28, argues that standing erect was not a normal posture of prayer in ancient Israel and that the Hebrew verbs for "stand" (*'amad* and *niššab*), when used in reference to people praying, are used in the *sensus technicus* of "station oneself." His argument is based on two passages, namely Nehemiah 9:2-3 and 1 Kings 8:22, 54, both of which mention the agent of the prayer standing to pray but then (again) standing at the end of the prayer. At the beginning of his article, he offers another possibility for explaining these cases, suggesting quite plausibly that the prayer involves both standing and kneeling in sequence. Inasmuch as there is no conclusive evidence to the contrary, we assume that the verbs *'amad* and *niššab*, when used in reference to an action in prayer, retain their literal sense of "stand erect."

Yahweh addresses elite Judahites who “trample [his] courts” on festival occasions (verses 12-14), bringing offerings and incense (verse 13), and spread their hands while praying (verse 15).

4.6.6.7. Details of the Gesture

Having shown that Palms Out and the cluster of phrases referring to the raising of the hands are basically equivalent in terms of context, we now address the issue of these gestures’ form. The gesture of Palms Out as depicted in Levantine art may be broken down into four key formal elements:

1. The gesture involves both hands in a mutually symmetrical position. (In two-dimensional art, it appears as if the hands are held at different distances from the body; however, Egyptian figurines showing this gesture clearly show both hands held out at an equal distance.⁴²⁴)
2. The hands are raised to about the height of the agent’s chin or face. (In Egyptian representations, such as the relief from the tomb of Horemheb discussed above, the hands may be raised high above the head and may even be fully extended.)
3. The palms and fingers of both hands are open and vertical.
4. The palms face forward, away from the agent’s body. This creates a clear aspect of directionality in the gesture, with the gesture’s direction matching the orientation of the agent’s body.

How do these formal elements compare with clues as to form in textual instances of *nšw’ yodayim (+adv)_{prayer}* and its synonyms? We take up each element in turn.

1. The cluster of synonymous Hebrew phrases including *nšw’ yodayim (+adv)_{prayer}* are clear as to the fact that both hands are involved, at least according to the vocalization of these phrases in the Masoretic text. The examples from Ugaritic and Aramaic are unfortunately ambiguous in this respect, except for the example in pAmherst 63 ix 17-19, whose orthography makes the dual “hands” clear (*n’st’ ydyh’*). In the absence of any contradictory evidence, we maintain that the three ambiguous cases in Ugaritic and Aramaic

⁴²⁴ An Egyptian figurine of this type from Ashkelon, now in the Israel Museum in Jerusalem, is pictured in Ephraim Stern, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible, Volume II* (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 499 (upper left). Another Egyptian example, this one from the Ptolemaic period, is Brooklyn Museum 57.165.8.

- involve both hands, since other contextual factors link these to the Hebrew examples. It is reasonably certain, therefore, that all of the textual examples adduced in this category involve the simultaneous positioning of both hands.
2. Indicators of the raising or lifting of the hands in this cluster of phrases include the verb *nśś* “lift up” and the noun *mo‘al* “putting up,” as well as various forms of the qualifier “to heaven.”
 3. The verb *pśraś* and its corresponding D stem *perś* indicate the spreading of the hands. As discussed in section 3.3.2.2, the phrase “spread the hands” most likely refers to the opening of the hands rather than the positioning of the hands apart from each other, although the latter possibility cannot be entirely excluded.
 4. Some passages indicate that the raised-hands gesture is directed to a Target that is on the same horizontal plane as the Agent. In section 2.2.21, for example, we pointed out that the two instances of this gesture in 1 Kings 8 seem to be directed “to the temple” (*‘el-habbayit*, 1 Kings 8:38).

In all essential points, therefore, the details of the Palms Out gesture in Levantine iconography match the formal details evident in the phrase *nśś yōdayim (+adv)_{prayer}* and its synonyms in Northwest Semitic literature. On the basis of form as well as of context, we can plausibly consider these gestures to be identical.

One last issue relevant to this gesture’s form, which issue will play a part in our analysis of meaning in chapter 5, is whether the gesture involves movement of the hands after raising them. Of course, the movement of figures is not portrayed in ancient Near Eastern iconography, except by implication through the poses of the figures or by showing a sequence. Levantine iconography does not furnish any evidence of movement in the gesture, although the Egyptian examples discussed above, which show sequences of poses including kneeling in Palms Out and prostrating with the hands to the ground, might be adduced. However, one example in the Hebrew Bible can only be understood if one presupposes that the gesture involved movement. In Isaiah 25:10-11, Moab, personified as a man being trampled down by Yahweh, is said to “spread out his hands” (*u^wperś yōdō^w*), and this is compared to a swimmer who spreads his hands to swim. Here Moab’s gesture (most likely a reference or allusion to the spreading of the hands in

prayer) is described as particularly desperate, so that the frantic motions of the hands are comparable to the strokes of a swimmer. The implication of this for the Palms Out gesture is that the latter could involve a movement of the hands that could be similar in some way to swimming strokes, such as repeated raising and lowering of the hands. However, we cannot argue on the basis of this one passage that the Palms Out gesture always involved this kind of movement. Since the verb in this passage is in the D stem, which is similar to other passages describing desperate prayers of entreaty, one could suggest that such movement in Palms Out was a marker of deperateness and that it was specifically denoted by the D-stem *perás*. Be that as it may, Isaiah 25:10-11 provides limited support for the idea that Palms Out could involve repeated movement on some occasions.

4.7. Palms In and Palms Sideways

Another gesture attested in Levantine iconography consists of the raising of both hands with the palms inward. Two varieties of this gesture can be distinguished formally in two-dimensional art, although it is difficult to distinguish between them in examples that are executed with less detail. In one variety, the palms appear to face toward the agent's body; in the other variety, the hands appear to be vertical, with the palms facing toward each other. We refer to these two varieties as "Palms In" and "Palms Sideways" respectively. Unlike Palm In and Palm Sideways, which the evidence favors treating as separate gestures (see the arguments in section 4.5), there are good reasons to view Palms In and Palms Sideways as two formal iconographic variants of a single gesture. First, unlike Palm In and Palm Sideways, there are no examples in which both Palms In and Palms Sideways occur together. Second, both Palms In and Palms Sideways are predominantly associated with a single agent: the "Babylonian Goddess" (so called

by Collon in her study of cylinder seals from Alalakh), identified on the basis of her iconographic attributes with the Mesopotamian goddess Lama.⁴²⁵

As far as genuinely Levantine sources go, Palms In and Palms Sideways are found only on cylinder seals, mostly of the Middle Bronze Age and rarely of the Late Bronze Age. In this way, the distribution of these two varieties mirrors that of the gestures Palm In and Palm Sideways. A few “West Semitic” inscribed stamp seals from the Iron Age depict Palms In, but these are entirely Mesopotamian in their style and cultural orientation, hence they do not imply use of the gesture during this period in the Levant.

4.7.1. Palms In and Palms Sideways on Cylinder Seals

Syrian-style cylinder seals showing Palms In and Palms Sideways have come to light through excavations at Alalakh and Hazor and through purchase. One seal now in the Yale Babylonian Collection (YBC 12775), unprovenanced but categorized on stylistic grounds as Middle Bronze Syrian, is shown in figure 39.⁴²⁶

⁴²⁵ Agnès Spycket, “La déesse Lama,” *Revue d’Assyriologie* 54 (1960): 73-84; Collon, *SITA*, 181-82.

⁴²⁶ Buchanan, *YBC*, 428-29 (no. 1247).

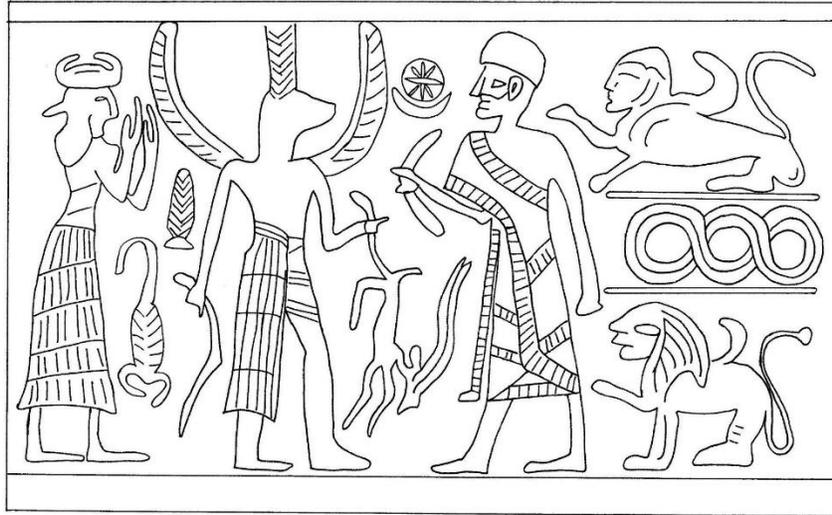


Figure 39. Cylinder seal showing the “Babylonian Goddess” in Palms In.
 Drawn by the author after Buchanan, *YBC*, 428.

This seal shows a female (the “Babylonian Goddess”) with a horned headdress and a flounced robe, standing, facing right, in Palms In with a grain stalk in front and a scorpion below. Before her is a winged male apparently with a grain stalk headdress (the head is mostly obscured), standing, facing right, his right hand to the side and grasping a sickle sword, his left hand forward and holding an ibex by the hind leg. Facing them is a male with a short headdress, standing, his right hand forward and grasping a branch or small bow, his left hand to the side. A sun disk in a crescent is in the field between the two confronted figures.

The remaining Syrian-style cylinder seals showing Palms In and Palms Sideways are gathered in the following list.

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| Antakya 7318
(4) | MB Alalakh / female with multi-horned headdress and flounced robe, standing, facing left, in Palms In ; before her is female with horned square headdress, standing, facing left, R forward and holding <i>ankh</i> sign; facing them is male with tall and round-topped headdress, standing, R in Palm Out, L forward and grasping rod / Collon, <i>SITA</i> , 9 (no. 6). |
| Antakya 7318
(5) | MB Alalakh / female with horned headdress and flounced robe, standing, facing left, in Palms In ; behind her are various human and animal figures, standing, facing right and left / Collon, <i>SITA</i> , 60 (no. 110). |

- Antakya 7322 (3) MB Alalakh / female with top of head missing, standing, facing right, **in Palms In**; before her is male with top of head missing, standing, facing right, R in Palm In, L forward and making fist; facing them is female with horned square headdress, standing, R in Fist Out, L held close to torso / Collon, *SITA*, 7 (no. 4).
- Antakya 7322 (4) MB Alalakh / female with horned headdress and flounced robe, standing, facing right, **in Palms In** / Collon, *SITA*, 64 (no. 117).
- Antakya 7327 MB Alalakh / female with horned headdress, standing, facing right, **in Palms Sideways**; before her is male with tall headdress, standing, facing right, R in Palm In, L forward and making fist; facing them is female with horned square headdress, standing, R forward and holding cup, L held close to torso; above the two facing figures is vulture or falcon holding Shen sign / Collon, *SITA*, 6 (no. 3).
- Antakya 7759 (1) MB Alalakh / female with horned headdress, standing, facing right, **in Palms In**; behind her is male with tall and rounded headdress, standing, facing right, L in uncertain hand gesture that overlaps with first figure's arm / Collon, *SITA*, 36 (no. 54).
- Antakya 7759 (2) MB Alalakh / female with horned headdress and flounced robe, standing, facing right, **in Palms In**; before her are female with horned sun disk headdress and male with horned headdress, standing, facing each other, embracing (female has L on male's right shoulder, male has R on female's shoulder, female's R grasps male's right wrist); on other side of embracing couple is another female with horned headdress and flounced robe, standing, facing left, **in Palms In** / Collon, *SITA*, 80-81 (no. 147).
- Antakya 7761 (6) MB Alalakh / female with horned headdress and flounced robe, standing, facing right, **in Palms In**; male with tall rounded headdress, standing, facing right, R in Palm In, L forward and making fist; facing them is female with horned square headdress, standing, R forward and holding *ankh* sign (her hand shape is identical to Palm In), L held close to torso / Collon, *SITA*, 8 (no. 5).
- Antakya 7876 (3) MB Alalakh / female with horned headdress and flounced robe, standing, facing right, **in Palms In**; facing her is female with top of head missing, wearing flounced robe, standing, **in Palms In**; between them is sun disk on standard atop short guilloche / Collon, *SITA*, 62 (no. 112).
- Antakya 7900 (10) (= 7960-61) MB Alalakh / male or female with short and rounded headdress, standing, facing right, **in Palms In**; from L emanates stream of *ankh* signs that flows over her head and behind her / Collon, *SITA*, 79 (no. 145).
- Antakya 7960-61 (11) MB Alalakh / figure, probably female (mostly missing), standing, facing left, **in Palms In** / Collon, *SITA*, 74-75 (no. 136).

- Antakya 7960-61 (12) MB Alalakh / female with horned headdress, standing, facing right, **in Palms In** with star above; before her is male with short rounded headdress (decorated with uncertain figure, possibly quadruped or uraeus), standing, facing right, R in Palm In, L forward and grasping pole of standard on which sun disk in crescent is mounted; facing him, on other side of standard, is another fragmentary figure who also grasps the pole / Collon, *SITA*, 81 (no. 148).
- Antakya 7960-61 (13) MB Alalakh / female with top of head missing but wearing flounced robe, standing, facing left, **in Palms In**; behind her is cuneiform inscription / Collon, *SITA*, 65-66 (no. 120).
- Antakya 7960-61 (14) MB Alalakh / female with top of head missing and features badly worn, standing, facing left, **in Palms In** / Collon, *SITA*, 66 (no. 121).
- Antakya 7960-61 (15) MB Alalakh / female with headdress (mostly missing), standing, facing left, **in Palms In** with sun disk in crescent above and *ankh* sign below; facing her is male with indistinct headdress, standing, L held close to torso and grasping mace, R to the side / Collon, *SITA*, 66 (no. 122).
- Antakya 8340 (3) LB Alalakh / male with rounded headdress (mostly missing), standing, facing right, **in Palms In**; before him are nude female grasping breasts and kneeling male figure, above whom is astral motif or rosette consisting of central dot surrounded by ten smaller dots / Collon, *SITA*, 106 (no. 197).
- Antakya 8340 (4) (= 8866+) LB Alalakh / female with horned headdress, standing, facing left, **in Palms Sideways**; facing her is male with short headdress, standing, R to the side and grasping sickle sword, L held close to torso; between them and in line with first figure's gesture is sun disk; gazelle between the two confronted figures, standing on hind legs and facing right / Collon, *SITA*, 99 (no. 189).
- Antakya 8880 (1) Alalakh / female with horned headdress, standing, facing right, **in Palms In**; before her is male with tall round-topped headdress, standing, facing right, R in Palm In, L forward and grasping spear; facing them is female with horned round-topped headdress, standing, R forward and holding cup, L mostly missing / Collon, *SITA*, 11 (no. 10).
- Antakya 8880 (2) Alalakh / female with horned headdress and flounced robe, standing, facing right, **in Palms In**; she possibly stands behind another figure, standing, facing right (mostly missing; this figure may be part of separate design on overlapping sealing) / Collon, *SITA*, 33-34 (no. 48).
- Antakya 8904 (= BM 131624) LB Alalakh / female with headdress (possibly horned) and flounced robe, standing, facing right, **in Palms Sideways**; facing her is male or female with top of head missing, seated, R extended with hand missing, L held close to torso; in field between them, at about face level, is bird on offering table / Collon, *SITA*, 105-6 (no. 196).

- Antakya 9084 LB Alalakh / female with no discernible headdress (parts of head missing or obscured), standing, facing left, **in Palms Sideways**; facing her is uncertain figure, standing, facing right, L extended in uncertain gesture / Collon, *SITA*, 98-99 (no. 188).
- Antakya 9726 Alalakh / female with top of head mostly missing, standing, facing left, **in Palms In** / Collon, *SITA*, 68 (no. 127).
- Ashmolean 1921.1198 P, Unknown provenance / female with horned headdress and flounced robe, standing, facing right, **in Palms In**; before her is smaller nude female with no headdress, standing, facing right, L in Palm Out with *ankh* sign below; facing them is male with short headdress, standing, R forward and holding uncertain object; behind this last figure is another male with top of head missing, standing, facing left, R in Palm In, L apparently tucked into robe; between the first and third figures and above the smaller female is sun disk in crescent / Buchanan, *AM* 1, 170 (no. 868).
- BM 131485 (= BM 131520) LB Alalakh / female figure with head missing, standing, facing right, **in Palms In**; facing her is male or female figure, seated, R forward in uncertain gesture (hand missing) / Collon, *SITA*, 105 (no. 195).
- BM 131648 MB Alalakh / female with top of head missing, wearing flounced robe, standing, facing left, **in Palms In** (some of L missing); most of scene around her is missing, but before her are traces of horned animal / Collon, *SITA*, 64 (no. 116).
- Newell 298 MB Syria / female with horned headdress and flounced robe, standing, facing left, **in Palms In** with eight-pointed star above; before her is smaller-scale female with horned headdress and flounced robe, standing, facing right, **in Palms In** with sun disk in crescent above; facing them is male of same scale as first female, wearing short horned headdress, standing, L held close to bosom and grasping mace, R to the side; various confronted pairs of quadrupeds, some with wings, in field around these figures / Frankfort, *CS*, pl. 41j; Buchanan, *YBC*, 422-23 (no. 1221).
- Newell 300 MB Syria / female with horned headdress and flounced robe, standing, facing left, **in Palms In**; before her is vertical guilloche border; facing her, on other side of guilloche border, is male with short and rounded headdress, standing, L in Palm In, R tucked into robe or behind back / Buchanan, *YBC*, 420-21 (no. 1216).
- PLU (95) Hazor, Area H, Locus 2113, Stratum 1A / female with multi-horned headdress (mostly missing) and flounced robe, standing, facing right, **in Palms In**; before her is male with round-topped headdress, seated, facing right, in uncertain hand gesture (Palm Out or Palm In); facing them is male with round-topped headdress, standing, L in Palm Out, R forward and grasping axe or scepter; winged disk above and between seated figure and approaching man / Yadin, *Hazor* III-IV, pl. 319.2.

In almost all cases, the agent is the “Babylonian Goddess,” identifiable by her standing posture, multi-horned headdress, flounced robe, and gesture. In the majority of cases, the gesture is Palms In; only four unambiguously show Palms Sideways. The connection between this figure’s gesture and that performed by the goddess Lama in Mesopotamian iconography will be discussed in section 4.7.3 below. There are only two clear cases in which a figure other than the “Babylonian Goddess” performs the Palms In gesture. First, on Antakya 7900 (10), a figure of uncertain gender, wearing a short and rounded headdress, performs the gesture as a stream of *ankh* signs emanates from his/her left hand. Second, on Antakya 8340 (3), another figure of uncertain gender, wearing a long (but not flounced) robe and a short and rounded headdress, performs the gesture.

In general, the contexts in which Palms In and Palms Sideways appear have analogs in Mesopotamian art. However, each type of context also has features that are distinctively Levantine. The most common type of scene in which the goddess Lama appears in Mesopotamian art is the “presentation scene,” in which a mortal suppliant approaches a seated deity or king.⁴²⁷ In these scenes, Lama either leads the suppliant by the hand, raising her other hand as she approaches the deity, or she stands behind the suppliant and performs Palms In or Palms Sideways.⁴²⁸ Scenes resembling the second type of presentation scene, in which Lama stands behind the mortal, appear with some frequency on the Syrian-style cylinder seals: Antakya 7322 (3), Antakya 7327, Antakya 7761 (6), Antakya 8880 (1). A major difference in the Syrian seals, however, is that the deity being approached is the standing “Syrian Goddess.” Also,

⁴²⁷ See Anton Moortgat, *Vorderasiatische Rollsiegel: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Steinschneidekunst* (Berlin: Verlag Gebr. Mann, 1966), pls. 34, 38-40 (nos. 252, 255-258, 285-302, 304, 307). On the “presentation scene” in general, see Henriette A. Groenewegen-Frankfort, *Arrest and Movement: An Essay on Space and Time in the Representational Art of the Ancient Near East* (New York: Hacker Art Books, Inc., 1978), 165-66, 169; Irene J. Winter, “The King and the Cup: Iconography of the Royal Presentation Scene on Ur III Seals,” in *Insight through Images: Studies in Honor of Edith Porada* (Malibu: Undena, 1986), 253-68.

⁴²⁸ Spycket, “Déesse Lama,” 81.

we cannot be certain that this type of scene on the Syrian seals has the same meaning as that attributed to the Mesopotamian presentation scene, namely that the “Babylonian Goddess” acts as an intercessor and that the one approaching the deity is a suppliant. The approaching mortal in each of the Levantine examples performs Palm In, which, as we argue above, typically occurs in the context of oath-taking (see section 4.4).

Other types of scenes on the Levantine seals also differ in significant ways from comparable Mesopotamian scenes, as in the following examples:

1. On Antakya 7759 (2), two “Babylonian Goddesses” in Palms In flank a god and goddess who embrace each other.⁴²⁹
2. On Antakya 7876 (3), two “Babylonian Goddesses” in Palms In flank a central motif, recalling scenes in which figures flanking a central motif perform Palm Out or Palms Out.⁴³⁰
3. On Antakya 7960-61 (15), the goddess performing Palms In faces a standing male figure, and an *ankh* sign appears beneath the goddess’s gesture, as often occurs with Palm Out and Palm In.⁴³¹
4. On Antakya 8904 and BM 131485, the goddess faces a seated figure directly, recalling a very common context of Palm Out.⁴³²
5. On PLU (95), the goddess performs Palms In toward the back of an enthroned male figure, again recalling similar scenes in which the Palm Out and Palms Out gestures are used.⁴³³

⁴²⁹ Roughly contemporary Old Babylonian seals show two Lama figures flanking a standing human figure or the cuneiform inscription of the seal; also comparable is the investiture panel from the royal palace at Mari, in which two Lama figures flank a large central scene of figures performing ritual actions. See Spycket, “La déesse Lama,” 82; André Parrot, “Les peintures du palais de Mari,” *Syria* 18 (1937): 335-46, pl. 39; Moortgat, *Vorderasiatische Rollsiegel*, nos. 340, 355 (two Lama figures flanking a standing human figure); nos. 480-88 (two Lama figures flanking a cuneiform inscription).

⁴³⁰ The central motif consists of a circle on a chain and, beneath it, a vertical guilloche pattern. Collon describes the upper part of the motif as “a standard (?) consisting of a large globe on a beaded rod” (Collon, *SITA*, 62); in the present author’s opinion, the “globe” part most likely represents a sun disk. This seal innovates not only in having the Lama goddesses face a symbolic motif rather than a human figure or inscription, but also in the style in which the goddesses’ robes and horned headdresses are rendered (see Collon, *SITA*, 62).

⁴³¹ For Old Babylonian seals showing Lama directly confronted with a standing figure, see Moortgat, *Vorderasiatische Rollsiegel*, nos. 322-348, 352-354, 356-359. None of these Old Babylonian examples show an *ankh* sign below Lama’s gesture.

⁴³² At least one Mesopotamian seal from the Ur III period shows a similar scene of Lama directly confronted with a seated figure: see Moortgat, *Vorderasiatische Rollsiegel*, no. 272. However, the chronological gap between this one and the two Levantine examples, both of which date to the Late Bronze Age, is quite large.

⁴³³ On an Old Babylonian seal in Moortgat, *Vorderasiatische Rollsiegel*, no. 305, Lama stands behind a seated figure, but her gesture in this case employs only one hand.

In addition to demonstrating the adaptation of contexts for Palms In and Palms Sideways away from Mesopotamian tradition and toward local concepts, these examples show the contextual similarity of Palms In with other Levantine gestures, especially Palm Out, Palm In, and Palms Out.

4.7.2. Palms In and Palms Sideways on Art Objects from the Iron Age

A few stamp seals from the Iron Age bearing inscriptions in Northwest Semitic script show a standing figure in Palms In. However, the small number of these seals and the fact that their style and iconography are thoroughly Mesopotamian argue against their inclusion in our main corpus. Two of these bear Aramaic inscriptions, and the other is classified by Avigad and Sass as Moabite.⁴³⁴ As we have mentioned in previous sections, the use of Aramaic script and language is not necessarily an indicator of Northwest Semitic identity during the Iron Age. Moreover, the name of the seal owner in one of the Aramaic examples is plainly Akkadian.

We also mention here two Assyrian reliefs that show Northwest Semites performing a gesture that could be interpreted as Palms In or Palms Sideways. One of these is a wall relief of Sennacherib (704-681 BCE) from Nineveh, now in the British Museum (BM 124911).⁴³⁵ It shows king Sennacherib seated on the right, and a group of captives from Lachish approach him from the left. The captives are in three postures: those furthest from the king stand, while those who are closest to him either kneel or prostrate themselves. The standing and kneeling ones perform what could be Palms In based on the curvature of the fingers, although all of the fingers are visible, which would normally suggest Palms Sideways. The relief includes an inscription in front of the king, but it does not relate to the actions performed by the captives. Othmar Keel

⁴³⁴ Avigad, *Corpus*, 293-94 (no. 784), 307 (no. 822), 384 (no. 1042).

⁴³⁵ See *ANEP*, 129, 293 (no. 371).

describes the gesture of the captives in this piece as one of supplication or entreaty.⁴³⁶ It is tempting to see this as a Northwest Semitic gesture answering to that which Gruber considers, based on textual sources, to be an expression of desire for the empty hands to be filled.⁴³⁷ However, as we have mentioned above, we lack contemporary parallels for such a gesture in Levantine iconography. Based on comparison with Levantine and Egyptian sources, what we would expect in this kind of scene (a procession toward a seated ruler) is Palms Out. It could be that the Assyrian artist has altered the actual gesture performed by the captives so that it is more comprehensible to an Assyrian audience. Of course, it could also be that the captives actually performed an Assyrian gesture, adapting to their addressees so as not to be misunderstood. In any case, the gesture portrayed on this relief is most likely based on Assyrian notions of the proper behavior of captives toward the king, without any necessary relationship to Levantine ritual gestures.

The second relief is a stela of Esarhaddon (680-669 BCE) from Zinjirli, now in the National Museum in Berlin (Berlin VA 2708).⁴³⁸ Before the standing king on the stela, two captives kneel, performing a gesture that is practically identical to that of the captives from Lachish on the Sennacherib relief.⁴³⁹ One of the two captives appears from his features to be king Taharka, the Kushite king of Egypt mentioned in the accompanying inscription. The other captive has Northwest Semitic features. Again, the gesture is probably best understood in terms of Assyrian concepts of nonverbal communication and not in terms of the customary gestures of the captives themselves.

⁴³⁶ Keel, *Symbolism*, 321, pl. 24.

⁴³⁷ Gruber, *Nonverbal Communication*, 25-32, 35-36.

⁴³⁸ *ANEP*, 154, 300-301 (no. 447).

⁴³⁹ Only the near hand of each figure is visible in this case, but the hands are shackled, so there is no doubt that both hands are raised.

4.7.3. Conclusions on Palms In and Palms Sideways

Based on the evidence we have just reviewed for Palms In and Palms Sideways, three tentative conclusions emerge. First, while the iconographic motif of the “Babylonian Goddess” in Palms In or Palms Sideways is definitely linked to the Mesopotamian goddess Lama, the motif was likely applied in the Levant to a gesture that differed in some respects from that of Lama as understood in Mesopotamia. This is evident from the depictions of the gesture’s details, the other agents who perform the gesture, and the overall scenes in which the gesture is used, all of which differ from Mesopotamian convention. In Mesopotamian two-dimensional art, when the level of detail is sufficient to distinguish the gesture’s form, Lama’s gesture is most often clearly shown as Palms Sideways, with the hand broad and straight and with the fingers delineated. In some cases in which the gesture appears close to Palms In, the thumb and fingers of each hand are close together, and the fingers spread out toward the tips, so that it could be interpreted as a way of depicting Palms Sideways with shadows covering the palms.⁴⁴⁰ Three-dimensional representations of Lama unambiguously show her gesture with the hands vertical, the palms facing sideways toward each other (sometimes the fingers are slightly curled as if holding a tube).⁴⁴¹ This implies that depictions of Lama’s gesture as Palms In should be interpreted as abstracted representations of the actual gesture, which is Palms Sideways. However, among the Levantine examples, the overriding majority clearly depict the gesture as Palms In, while only four examples (three of which are from the later period) show it as Palms Sideways. This implies the opposite scenario, namely that the few examples of Palms Sideways should be understood as variants or abstracted representations of Palms In. Further, in addition to Lama, two unidentified figures also perform the gesture. As we have shown, the scenes in which the “Babylonian

⁴⁴⁰ See, for example, Moortgat, *Vorderasiatische Rollsiegel*, nos. 331, 345.

⁴⁴¹ See Donald J. Wiseman, “The goddess Lama at Ur,” *Iraq* 22 (1960): 166-71; Muscarella, *Ladders to Heaven*, 94-96; Spycket, *Statuaire*, pls. 156-59.

Goddess” and the other figures are placed differ in significant ways from their Mesopotamian analogs, suggesting that the scenes were adapted to local concepts of the gesture’s function.

Second, the contexts in which Palms In and Palms Sideways appear in Bronze Age Levantine iconography are analogous to contexts in which Palm Out, Palm In, and Palms Out appear. This may be suggestive of the function(s) of the gesture indicated by Palms In and Palms Sideways; for example, it may have had a performative or oath-taking function in some contexts and a function of accompanying prayer or a pledge of allegiance in others. One or more of these functions (such as that of accompanying prayer) may have provided a basis for the use of the “Babylonian Goddess” figure as the main agent for this gesture. However, the paucity of data prevents further conclusions on this matter.

Third, the gesture indicated by Palms In and Palms Sideways may have disappeared from Levantine culture by the Iron Age, as we have suggested above for Palm In and Palm Sideways. This conclusion (like the others) is necessarily tentative, since new data demonstrating the existence of this gesture in later periods may someday emerge. Still, there is an obvious contrast in distribution between Fist Up, Palm Out, and Palms Out on the one hand and Palm In, Palm Sideways, Palms In, and Palms Sideways on the other. The former three are attested on a wide range of media in both the Bronze and the Iron Ages, while the latter four are restricted to Bronze Age glyptic art. Moreover, the number of attestations of Palms In and Palms Sideways diminishes from the Middle to the Late Bronze Age (as with Palm In and Palm Sideways), perhaps indicating a waning of the underlying gesture’s practice or significance before it ultimately disappeared. The functions of this gesture may have merged with those of other gestures that appear in similar contexts (Palm Out, Palm In, and Palms Out), like the merging of consonants based on similar features in spoken languages. As with the other gestures showing

the same distribution, we find no phrase in textual sources that matches Palms In and Palms Sideways in terms of context, formal details, and chronological attestation.

4.8. Confronted Figure Handclasp

Having discussed various gestures performed at a distance from the target, we now move to a gesture involving contact with the target: a handclasp exchanged between confronted figures, referred to here as the “Confronted Figure Handclasp.” This gesture is typically depicted as a joining of the adjacent hands of the two parties at about waist level or slightly lower. Attestations of the Confronted Figure Handclasp occur on a carved ivory, cylinder seals, scarabs, and an Iron Age stamp seal. While the attestations are not very numerous, the range of these objects and the consistency of contexts in which the gesture is found suggest that this was a long-established Levantine gesture.

4.8.1. Confronted Figure Handclasp on Carved Ivories

A Phoenician ivory fan handle, acquired on the antiquities market, is perhaps the clearest example of the Confronted Figure Handclasp. This object is inscribed with the name *ʿbdb ʿl* and may thus be referred to as the “‘Abdibaʿl fan handle.” The scene on this object is shown in figure 40.⁴⁴²

⁴⁴² This piece belongs to the Elie Borowski collection; it was loaned to the Royal Ontario Museum of Archaeology in 1956 and was subsequently loaned to the Israel Museum. In 1981, it was incorporated into the collection of the Lands of the Bible Archaeology Foundation (on display at the Royal Ontario Museum), then became part of the collection of the Bible Lands Museum in Israel. The side not shown in figure 40 contains a scene of a pair of griffins flanking a sacred tree motif. See Israel Museum, *Highlights of the Permanent Collections* (Jerusalem: Japhet Press, 1965), 244-45; Karl P. Katz, P. P. Kahane, and Magen Broshi, *From the Beginning: Archaeology and Art in the Israel Museum, Jerusalem* (New York: Reynal and Company, Inc., 1968), 77-78, 277; Muscarella, *Ladders to Heaven*, 286, 326-27 (no. 265). In the latter source, Muscarella expresses some doubt about the authenticity of the engraved scene (although the ancient origin of the fan handle itself is not in doubt). His concerns revolve around the “crudely drawn” nature of the figures; however, a verdict concerning authenticity does not necessarily follow from the artist’s skill (or lack thereof). Muscarella also cites iconographic parallels provided to him in a personal

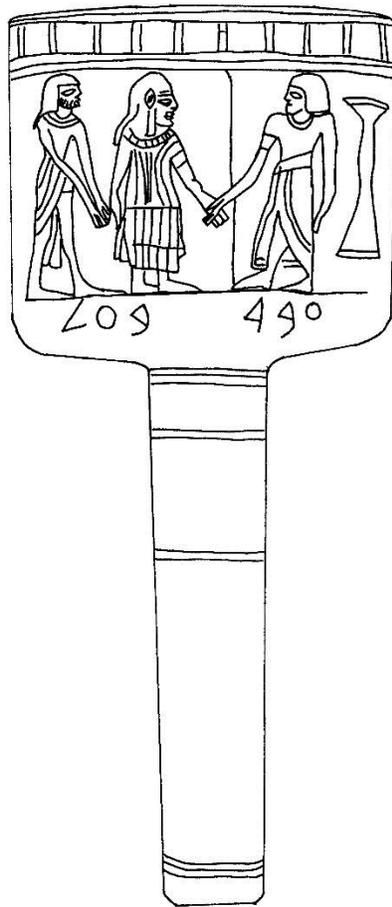


Figure 40. Ivory fan handle of 'Abdiba'l.
Drawn by author after Katz, Kahane, and Broshi, *From the Beginning*, 76.

The middle figure in this scene is a male with no headdress, standing and facing right. His right hand is to the side, while his left hand is in the Confronted Figure Handclasp with the right hand of the figure on the right. This second figure is a male with no headdress; his posture is one of standing like that of the first figure, and his left hand hangs to the side. Behind the first figure is a male with no headdress who stands, facing right, with both hands slightly raised in front.

communication by Irene Winter, which parallels would argue for a first millennium BCE Phoenician attribution. The Israel Museum publications date the piece to ca. 800 BCE. Thanks are due to Mr. Bill Pratt of the Royal Ontario Museum for information about the modern history and publication of this piece.

Between the confronted figures is a vertical line that crosses behind the wrist of the second figure. This vertical line is not just an accidental scratch, since it is straight, stops at the ceiling and ground lines and at the wrist of the second figure, and appears to be cut to the same depth as the other incisions on the piece. This line seems to represent a veil or other partition through which the two figures clasp hands. There is also an altar behind the figure on the right, indicating a temple setting. According to Katz, Kahane, and Broshi, the central figure is 'Abdiba'l, whose name is inscribed on the object; the man behind him is his "attendant"; and the man on the right who clasps hands with 'Abdiba'l is a "priest." The first two identifications seem likely, but the identity of the figure on the right is more ambiguous. If not a priest, this figure may be a king or a deity.

4.8.2. Confronted Figure Handclasp in Glyptic Art

Two Middle Bronze Age cylinder seals, including one from Alalakh and one from Ugarit, attest the Confronted Figure Handclasp. The seal from Ugarit, PLU (36), was acquired by purchase but is dated on stylistic grounds to the Middle Bronze Age.⁴⁴³ This seal is shown in figure 41.

⁴⁴³ Amiet, *SC*, 28, 31 (no. 42); Teissier, *Egyptian Iconography*, 50-51, 126-27 (no. 9). This seal was also presented above (section 4.2.4) in connection with the Fist Up gesture of one of the figures on the seal.

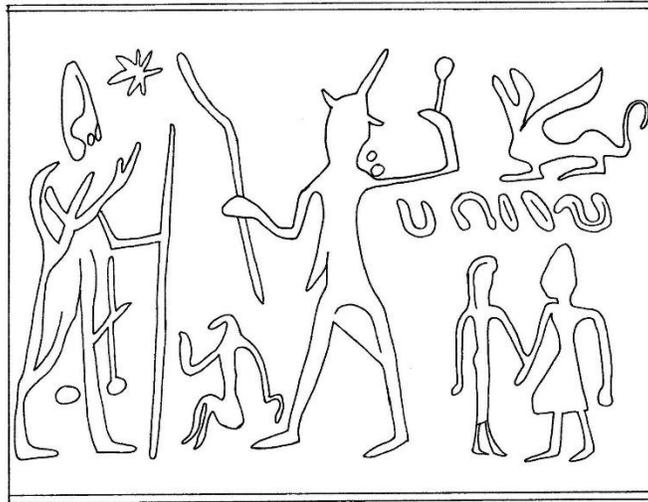


Figure 41. Cylinder seal from Ugarit showing Confronted Figure Handclasp.
 Drawn by the author after Amiet, *SC*, 31.

This scene shows a standing female with no headdress, facing right, her right hand to the side, her left hand in the Confronted Figure Handclasp with the right hand of a standing male (she appears to grasp his wrist). The latter wears a horned headdress and lets his left hand hang to the side. Amiet speculates that both figures are deities, but the status of the female, who wears no headdress, is less certain.⁴⁴⁴ This small scene is included alongside other scenes on this seal, and a guilloche border separates this small scene from a griffin that reclines above. However, within the scene itself, there is no indicator of any larger context for the gesture.

The cylinder seal Antakya 7759 (2) was excavated at Alalakh and is dated to the Middle Bronze Age.⁴⁴⁵ It shows a female with a horned sun disk headdress and a male with a horned headdress, standing and facing each other. The figures' hands closest to the viewer are joined in the Confronted Figure Handclasp (the female grasps the wrist of the male), while the hands furthest from the viewer are placed on each other's shoulders. Behind each figure is a female with a horned headdress and flounced robe, standing, facing inward and performing the Palms In

⁴⁴⁴ Amiet, *SC*, 28: "déesse (?) tenant un dieu par la main."

⁴⁴⁵ Collon, *SITA*, 80-81 (no. 147). This seal was also discussed above in the section on Palms In (section 4.7).

gesture (these female figures are iterations of the “Babylonian Goddess,” discussed above in section 4.7). In this case, it appears certain that the two central figures, who are the agents and targets of the Confronted Figure Handclasp, are both deities. As with PLU (36), there is no positive indicator of the setting or of the larger context in which the gesture is performed, although the presence of the flanking “Babylonian Goddesses” seems to imply that it is a significant ritual occasion.

An assortment of Middle Bronze Age scarab seals, mostly belonging to the distinctive “Hyksos” style, also attest the existence of the Confronted Figure Handclasp during this early period. The majority of these seals have been excavated at various sites in the Levant, while a few have been acquired on the antiquities market.

An example of a Hyksos scarab showing this gesture, excavated at Pella, Jordan (excavation number 70666), is shown in figure 42.⁴⁴⁶

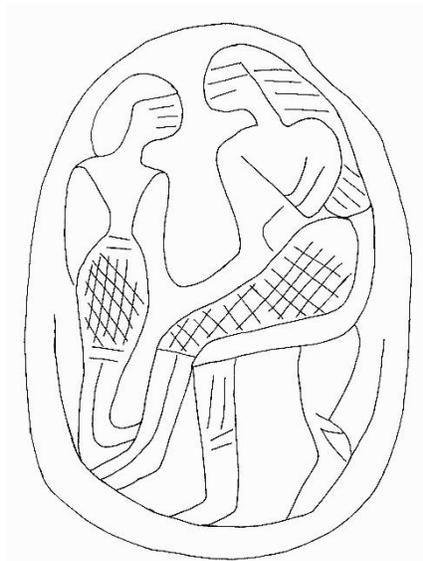


Figure 42. Scarab from Pella, Jordan, showing Confronted Figure Handclasp.
Drawn by author after Richards, *Scarab Seals*, pl. 3.

⁴⁴⁶ Fiona V. Richards, *Scarab Seals from a Middle to Late Bronze Age Tomb at Pella in Jordan* (Fribourg: University Press, 1992), 90-91, pl. 3 (no. 11).

This scarab depicts a standing female, facing right, in the Confronted Figure Handclasp with a seated female. The Pella scarab is unusual in that the two confronted figures are apparently of unequal status: one is seated and is of larger proportions, while the other is smaller and has a standing posture. In most glyptic examples of the Confronted Figure Handclasp, the two figures are of the same size and posture, so that the overall design of the scene is symmetrical. This is illustrated by a scarab from Tell el-Far‘ah South, now at the University of London Institute of Archaeology (LIA EVII.59/37), shown in figure 43.⁴⁴⁷

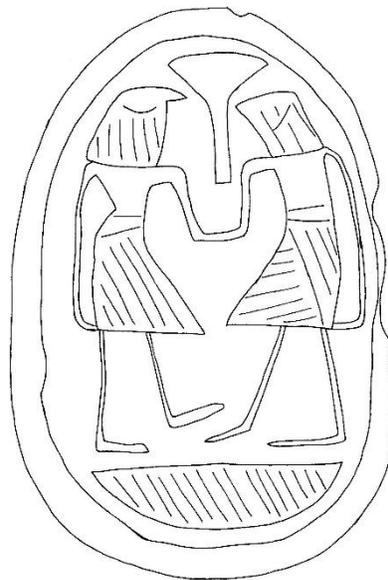


Figure 43. Scarab from Tell el-Far‘ah South, showing Confronted Figure Handclasp.
Drawn by the author after Keel, *Corpus III*, 163.

On this seal, two falcon-headed males with no headdress stand facing each other in the Confronted Figure Handclasp; a small plant motif hovers in the field above their clasped hands. The symmetry of the figures and the appearance of a plant motif above the clasped hands make this scene comparable to some cylinder seals of Mitannian style.⁴⁴⁸ However, unlike the latter,

⁴⁴⁷ Keel, “Identifikation des Falkenköpfigen,” 250 (no. 14); Keel, *Corpus III*, 162-63 (no. 312).

⁴⁴⁸ For example, see the Alalakh cylinder seal Antakya 8007, published by Collon in *ACS*, 82, unnumbered plate (no. 57).

the figures on this scarab have falcon heads and Egyptian clothing, and their legs do not overlap (instead, the figure on the left seems to be stepping on the foot of the one of the right).

The remaining two examples of this type, both excavated at Tell el-‘Ajjul and now located in the Rockefeller Museum in Jerusalem, may be described as follows:

- | | |
|------------------------|---|
| Rockefeller
35.3957 | MB Tell el-‘Ajjul / two standing males with no headdress, in Confronted Figure Handclasp / Rowe, <i>Catalogue</i> , 77, pl. 8 (no. 296); Tufnell, <i>Studies on Scarab Seals</i> , 2/2, nos. 2472, 2797; Keel, <i>Corpus I</i> , 334-35 (no. 679). |
| Rockefeller
38.488 | MB Tell el-‘Ajjul / two standing females with no headdress, in Confronted Figure Handclasp ; small plant motif below their joined hands; sun disk above their heads / Tufnell, <i>Studies on Scarab Seals</i> , 2/2, nos. 2446, 2798; Keel, <i>Corpus I</i> , 460-61 (no. 1045). |

The first of these, Rockefeller 35.3957, is a straightforward example of the Confronted Figure Handclasp with no additional motifs. On Rockefeller 38.488, the plant motif exceptionally occurs below the joined hands instead of above them.

Fourteen Hyksos scarabs show a pair of confronted figures whose extended hands intersect with the trunk or stem of a floral motif. These scarabs have usually been interpreted as if the two figures are holding or supporting the floral motif. Alan Rowe, for example, describes one such scarab as follows: “In the centre is a large palm or conventional lotus supported on either side by a deity with human body and falcon’s head...one is perhaps Horus and the other Seth, shown as reconciled.”⁴⁴⁹ Othmar Keel interprets this type of scene as an originally Asiatic motif that has been Egyptianized by changing the figure of the king into the falcon-headed figure of the Egyptian god Horus. According to Keel’s interpretation, the scene depicts the king (in two

⁴⁴⁹ Alan Rowe, *A Catalogue of Egyptian Scarabs, Scaraboids, Seals and Amulets in the Palestine Archaeological Museum* (Cairo: Imprimerie de l’Institut Francais d’Archéologie Orientale, 1936), 77 (no. 294). The idea that these seals represent Horus and Seth being reconciled comes from Petrie, as Rowe explains earlier on page 13 (under no. 46). Rowe fails to note that the notion of a direct interaction between the two gods is out of harmony with his assumption that the scene depicts the two gods supporting the tree; see further below. The scarab that Rowe describes here is Rockefeller 35.3955 in the list of scarabs in this section.

iterations) supporting or honoring a sacred tree, this action symbolizing the legitimization of the king and the maintenance of cosmic order through kingship.⁴⁵⁰

A second interpretation, appearing sporadically in studies of these scarabs and never fully articulated, posits that they show a handclasp between the two figures who flank the plant motif. Rowe reports that the idea of these scarabs depicting the reconciliation of Horus and Seth was that of W. M. Flinders Petrie; in adopting this idea, Rowe evidently altered it, since the reconciliation of Horus and Seth should properly involve a handclasp between them instead of a supporting of the plant motif.⁴⁵¹ Indeed, the victory hymn of Thutmose III, found on a stela at Karnak, may contain a reference to this very event (*Urk* IV, 618:1-3). Here Amun-Re says the following, speaking to Thutmose:

*ii.n=i di=i titi=k iwnty.w sty r-mn-m š3t m 3mmt=k di=i m3=sn hm=k mi sn.wy=k
dmd.n=i ʿ.wy=sn n=k m n[ht]*

I have come to cause you to trample the Nubians—(everything) as far as Shat is in your grasp! (I have also come) to cause them to see your majesty like your two brothers—I joined their hands for you in vi[ctory]!

It is virtually unanimously agreed that Thutmose’s “two brothers” mentioned here are Horus and Seth.⁴⁵² The antecedent of the suffix pronoun in ʿ.wy=sn “their arms” might be the “two brothers,” and if so, then this could refer to the reconciliation of Horus and Seth being consummated by the joining of their hands.⁴⁵³ In Raphael Givon’s description of one of these

⁴⁵⁰ Keel, “Identifikation des Falkenköpfigen,” 252-59; see especially page 256.

⁴⁵¹ Rowe, *Catalogue*, 13 (no. 46).

⁴⁵² James Henry Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1906), 2:266nA; John A. Wilson in *ANET*, 375n15; Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, vol. 2 (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1976), 39n13.

⁴⁵³ Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, 2:37, makes this interpretation clear in her translation of the last two clauses: “I let them see your majesty as your Two Brothers, whose hands I joined for you in victory.” Most translations, however, leave the meaning here ambiguous. Normally, the dual ʿ.wy=sn would mean “both hands of each of them,” but this pattern is “liable to exceptions” (Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar*, 415; note that most of the exceptions which Gardiner lists here happen to occur within five pages of this text in *Urk* IV). Thus it is possible

Hyksos scarabs, he explicitly invokes the clasping of hands: “Two bird-headed women kneel on a nb sign from which emerges a palm tree. They hold hands across the trunk of the tree.”

Unfortunately, Giveon does not present an argument here, nor does he consistently maintain this interpretation elsewhere.⁴⁵⁴ Keel also concedes that some examples of this type may depict a handclasp: “In einzelnen Fällen mag diese Bedeutung [of the sealing of a covenant] intendiert sein, wenn zwei deutlich verschiedene Personen vor bzw. unter einem Baum einander die Hand geben.”⁴⁵⁵ For this possibility, Keel adduces as a parallel a Palmyrene relief from Rome, which shows the gods Malakbel and Aglibol flanking a “sacred cypress” and clasping each other’s hands, their clasped hands being immediately in front of the tree’s trunk (from the viewer’s perspective).⁴⁵⁶

In view of the internal evidence from the Hyksos scarabs, the interpretation as a handclasp is certainly correct, despite the predominance of the contrary interpretation in the literature. In some instances, the arms and joined hands of the two flanking figures are

that the form in this case means “one hand of each of them (two).” Alternatively, the antecedent of the suffix in $\text{C.}wy=sn$ could be the Nubians; if so, the joining of hands could be interpreted as the binding of the hands of Nubian captives, or perhaps as a gesture of surrender or submission. In the latter case, $n=k$ would best be rendered “to you” instead of “for you.”

⁴⁵⁴ Giveon, *ESWA*, 80 (no. 60). The scarab referred to here is BM L. 1023, which we discuss below.

⁴⁵⁵ Keel, “Identifikation des Falkenköpfigen,” 256n12. We would take issue with Keel’s criterion that the two participants have to be significantly different, since part of what is communicated in these scenes may be that the two participants are complete equals by virtue of their ritual act.

⁴⁵⁶ Keel, “Identifikation des Falkenköpfigen,” 256n12; H. J. W. Drijvers, *The Religion of Palmyra* (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 17, pl. 38. Additional parallels for this motif can be found among the Mitannian cylinder seals from Nuzi and Alalakh. See, for example, Edith Porada, *Seal Impressions of Nuzi*, *Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 24 (1944-1945), nos. 131-32, 243-45, 248, 250-51, 255-60, 262-63, 265, 267, 271, 273-75, 286, 340-41. Incidentally, some Mitannian seals show only one figure touching the tree: see Porada, *Seal Impressions*, nos. 106-8, 141, 215-16, 232, 249, 264. Since this latter type definitely does not portray a handclasp, it may be taken to imply that the same is true for the type showing two flanking figures. Porada thus describes these seals as showing “the grasping of the tree by one or two figures” (Porada, *Seal Impressions*, 112). However, a Mitannian seal from Alalakh clearly shows a pair of flanking figures clasping each other’s hands, while the plant motif hovers above the clasped hands rather than intersecting with them: see Collon, *ACS*, 82, unnumbered plate (no. 57). This nicely parallels the Hyksos scarabs, in which the plant motif may also intersect with or hover above the joined hands. It should also be noted that Porada and Collon interpret all of these scenes on the Mitannian seals as showing a dance (Porada, *Seal Impressions*, 112; Collon, *ACS*, 82). This interpretation would fit with the idea that the flanking figures are joining hands, since a dance around a tree could involve a joining of hands as easily as it could involve touching the tree.

represented by an unbroken double line, behind which the plant motif passes (see, for example, the scarab shown in figure 44 below).⁴⁵⁷ This is fatal to the idea that the flanking figures are supporting the tree, whereas the examples in which the plant motif passes in front of the joined hands do not pose a challenge under the handclasp interpretation, since the hands can be joined on either side of the plant. In all the examples in which the tree interrupts the line(s) of the arms, the arms of both figures meet the tree at the same point along the tree's height, so that it is easy to imagine the hands being joined.⁴⁵⁸ Finally, one may point to the continuity of this type with the other Hyksos scarabs described above, which show a handclasp without any intersecting object. Some of these other examples have no plant motif at all, while others include a smaller plant motif that hovers above or stands below the joined hands without touching them. We can understand all of these examples as showing a handclasp with the optional presence of a plant motif above, below, in front of, or behind the joined hands.⁴⁵⁹

⁴⁵⁷ These instances, all of which are included in the discussion below, include IAA 72-5828/1, PTS 1-0111, Rockefeller 35.3978 (shown in figure 44), and Rockefeller 35.3989. Also compare BM 51902, on which the joined hands are represented by a single line, but this line casts a shadow over the line of the plant motif's stem in the photograph, showing that the joined hands are superimposed over the plant motif and not vice versa. In all of these cases, in which the extended arms of the confronted figures are shown as a continuous single or double line, the hands are not differentiated. This may have some ideological import, such as signifying that the two parties, by virtue of their ritual act, are now as one (this might coincide with the fact that the two parties are often represented as identical, perhaps signifying that they, by virtue of their ritual act, are now equal in every way). However, it is also possible that the hands are left undifferentiated due to the simplicity of the engraving technique and the fact that the hands are among the most difficult body parts to portray in two-dimensional art (which difficulty is, of course, compounded in the case of joined hands).

⁴⁵⁸ One particular cylinder seal is interpreted in studies by Keel and Teissier as showing two men flanking and grasping a sacred tree, with their hands meeting the tree at different points. See Keel, "Identifikation des Falkenköpfigen," 262, no. 61; Teissier, *Egyptian Iconography*, 108-9, no. 221. However, a close look at the photograph of this seal in William A. Ward, "Un cylindre syrien inscrit de la deuxième période intermédiaire," *Syria* 42 (1965): pl. 5 (no. 9) reveals details that suggest a different interpretation of the scene. What Keel and Teissier interpret as a sacred tree actually appears to be a tall scepter or staff. The figure on the left grasps it, while the figure on the right only extends his hand toward it (the line representing his hand ends just before it reaches the staff). The staff appears to be a modified *was* scepter; in any case, it does not resemble a tree and is not symmetrical like most examples of the central tree motif.

⁴⁵⁹ A couple of inscribed Egyptian scarabs from the New Kingdom in Irene Vodoz, *Catalogue raisonné des scarabées gravés du Musée d'art et d'histoire de Genève* (Genève: Société académique de Genève, 1979), 21, 152, do plainly show two symmetrical kneeling figures supporting a plant motif (in one, the two figures each use two hands; in the other, their arms are bent in such a way that a handclasp seems unlikely). Given their purely Egyptian style and the fact that they are chronologically later than the Hyksos scarabs considered here, these New Kingdom scarabs may represent a misinterpretation of the earlier motif (paralleling the modern misinterpretation that

An example of the latter type of scarab (with the plant motif passing behind the joined hands), excavated at Tell el-‘Ajjul and now located in the Rockefeller Museum in Jerusalem (Rockefeller 35.3978), is shown in figure 44.⁴⁶⁰

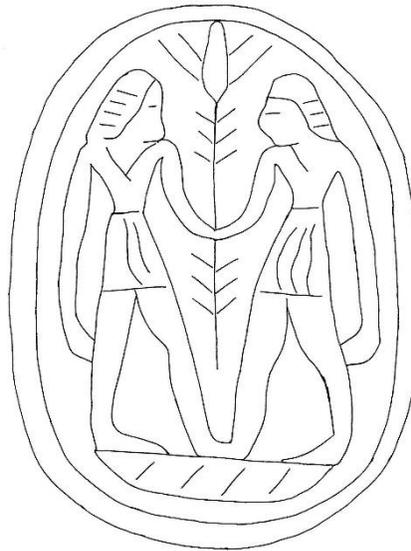


Figure 44. Scarab from Tell el-‘Ajjul, showing Confronted Figure Handclasp.
Drawn by the author after Rowe, *Catalogue*, pl. 8.

Shown here are two standing males with no headdress, facing each other in the Confronted Figure Handclasp. A tall plant motif, whose stem is represented by a single line, passes behind the double line that constitutes the joined hands of the two figures.⁴⁶¹

The remaining “Hyksos” seals in which a plant motif intersects with the joined hands (passing behind the joined hands, in front of them, or immediately above and touching them) are described in the following list.

predominates in the literature) as a supporting of the tree rather than a clasping of hands. In any case, the two New Kingdom scarabs do not vitiate our assertion that the scarabs of the Hyksos group show a clasping of hands, an assertion based on the internal evidence of the scarabs themselves.

⁴⁶⁰ Rowe, *Catalogue*, 77, pl. 8 (no. 295); Keel, “Identifikation des Falkenköpfigen,” 255 (no. 28); Tufnell, *Studies on Scarab Seals* 2/2, no. 2784.

⁴⁶¹ As the photograph in Rowe, *Catalogue*, pl. 8 shows, the drawing in Tufnell, *Studies on Scarab Seals* 2/2, no. 2784 is more accurate than that in Keel, “Identifikation des Falkenköpfigen,” 255 (no. 28). In the latter, the hands of the facing figures are erroneously bisected by the vertical line of the plant.

- BM 51902 MB Syria / two kneeling falcon-headed males with no headdress, **in Confronted Figure Handclasp**; tall plant motif between them / Sidney Smith, "Babylonian Cylinder Seals from Egypt," *JEA* 8 (1922): 208, pl. 23.6; Othmar Keel, "Zur Identifikation des Falkenköpfigen auf den Skarabäen der ausgehenden 13. und der 15. Dynastie," in *Studien zu den Stempelsiegeln aus Palästina/Israel*, Band II (Fribourg: University Press, 1989), 250 (no. 16).
- BM L. 1023 MB Tell el-‘Ajjul / two kneeling falcon-headed males with no headdress, **in Confronted Figure Handclasp**; tall plant motif between them / Keel, "Identifikation des Falkenköpfigen," 250 (no. 15); Tufnell, *Studies on Scarab Seals*, 2/2, no. 2787; Giveon, *ESWA*, 80-81 (no. 60).
- IAA 72-5828/1 MB Tell Abu Zureiq, Israel / two standing males with no headdress, **in Confronted Figure Handclasp**; tall plant motif between them / Giveon, "Scarabs from Recent Excavations," 20-21, pl. 1 (no. 3); Keel, "Identifikation des Falkenköpfigen," 255 (no. 27); Keel, *Corpus I*, 16-17 (no. 3).
- MMA NN (2) MB Tell el-‘Ajjul / two standing males with no headdress, **in Confronted Figure Handclasp**; tall plant motif between them / Keel, "Identifikation des Falkenköpfigen," 255 (no. 30); Tufnell, *Studies on Scarab Seals*, 2/2, no. 2786.
- PTS 1-0107 MB Tell Beit Mirsim / two kneeling males with no headdress, **in Confronted Figure Handclasp**; tall plant motif between them / Keel, "Identifikation des Falkenköpfigen," 255 (no. 31); Keel, *Corpus II*, 50-51 (no. 19).
- PTS 1-0111 MB Tell Beit Mirsim / two standing males with no headdress, **in Confronted Figure Handclasp**; tall plant motif between them / Keel, *Corpus II*, 44-45 (no. 6).
- Rockefeller 35.3955 MB Tell el-‘Ajjul / two standing falcon-headed males with no headdress, **in Confronted Figure Handclasp**; tall plant motif between them / Rowe, *Catalogue*, 77, pl. 8 (no. 294); Tufnell, *Studies on Scarab Seals* 2/2, no. 2788; Keel, "Identifikation des Falkenköpfigen," 250 (no. 12).
- Rockefeller 35.3989 MB Tell el-‘Ajjul / two kneeling males with Red Crowns, **in Confronted Figure Handclasp**; plant motif above their joined hands / Rowe, *Catalogue*, 77-78, pl. 8 (no. 297); Keel, "Identifikation des Falkenköpfigen," 255 (no. 33); Tufnell, *Studies on Scarab Seals*, 2/2, no. 2782; Keel, *Corpus I*, 428-29 (no. 956).
- Rockefeller NN MB Unknown Provenance / confronted male or female figures with no headdress, kneeling, **in Confronted Figure Handclasp**; lotus between them; above head of each figure stands a bird / Rowe, *Catalogue*, 20, pl. 2 (no. 67).
- PLU (96) MB Megiddo (Stratum XI) / two standing falcon-headed males with no headdress, **in Confronted Figure Handclasp**; tall plant motif between them / Loud, *Megiddo II*, pl. 150.82; Keel, "Identifikation des Falkenköpfigen," 250 (no. 11).

- PLU (97) MB-LB Kerma⁴⁶² / two standing falcon-headed males with no headdress, **in Confronted Figure Handclasp**; tall plant motif between them / G. A. Reisner, *Excavations at Kerma, Parts IV-V* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Peabody Museum, 1923), pls. 40-41; Keel, “Identifikation des Falkenköpfigen,” 250 (no. 13).
- PLU (98) Unknown provenance / two kneeling falcon-headed males with no headdress, **in Confronted Figure Handclasp**; tall plant motif between them / Keel, “Identifikation des Falkenköpfigen,” 250 (no. 17).
- PLU (99) Unknown provenance / two kneeling males with no headdress (one on left is falcon-headed, one on right has face with two projections that resemble pincers or horns), **in Confronted Figure Handclasp**; tall plant motif between them / Irene Vodoz, *Catalogue raisonné des scarabées gravés du Musée d’art et d’histoire de Genève* (Genève: Société académique de Genève, 1979), 74-75 (no. 38); Keel, “Identifikation des Falkenköpfigen,” 250 (no. 18).

Iron Age glyptic art includes examples of the Confronted Figure Handclasp in the same kind of scene as the Middle Bronze Age Hyksos scarabs, with a plant motif that intersects with the clasped hands. This implies that the general motif was kept alive or was resuscitated between these two periods, despite the fact that we have no securely-dated examples of this motif during the Late Bronze Age. For example, a conoid stamp seal from Akko (IAA 73-101), formerly part of a private collection but likely dating to the Iron Age I, shows two figures flanking a tall plant motif, their extended arms intersecting with the plant. The style of this seal is very rough, but it generally accords with the motif on the Middle Bronze Age scarabs.⁴⁶³

A more complex Iron Age example is a Phoenician stamp seal from the Biggio collection, Sant’Antiocho, Italy.⁴⁶⁴ This seal is shown in figure 45.

⁴⁶² This scarab may have been a trade item or a Nubian imitation of a Hyksos scarab.

⁴⁶³ Keel, “Identifikation des Falkenköpfigen,” 255 (no. 29). This seal was formerly of the Lefkovitz Collection, Akko, no. 146.

⁴⁶⁴ Eric Gubel, “The Iconography of Inscribed Phoenician Glyptic,” in *Studies in the Iconography of Northwest Semitic Inscribed Seals*, ed. Benjamin Sass and Christoph Uehlinger (Fribourg: University Press, 1993), 111-12 (no. 21); Avigad, *Corpus*, 273 (no. 733).



Figure 45. Stamp seal from the Biggio collection.
 Drawn by the author after Avigad, *Corpus*, 273.

This seal shows the standing figures of Khonsu with the Double Crown and Isis with a horned sun disk headdress (both figures identified by hieroglyphs in front of them), their hands extended toward a lotus plant that stands between them. Atop the lotus plant are a seated figure with a sun disk headdress, facing left, and a standing female with no discernible headdress, facing the seated figure.⁴⁶⁵ The latter raises her left hand in Palm Out, while her right hand hangs to the side. The lotus plant interrupts the arc formed by the hands of Khonsu and Isis, but it is possible, based on comparison with the examples discussed above, that their hands are joined behind the lotus. Behind Khonsu is a lion-headed goddess with a sun disk headdress, standing, her left hand forward and grasping a tall flower-topped scepter, her right hand to the side.⁴⁶⁶ Above the entire

⁴⁶⁵ The seated figure on the lotus could correspond to the Egyptian Harpokrates or Nefertem, two deities that are shown seated on a lotus in Egyptian iconography. The identity of the standing figure who faces him is uncertain.

⁴⁶⁶ This lion-headed goddess, although not named on the seal itself, corresponds to the Egyptian goddess Sakhmet. Cf. Avigad, *Corpus*, 273.

scene is a winged sun disk. A Phoenician inscription in the exergue identifies the seal owner: *gr'šmn b- / n ḥmlk*, “Gereshmun, son of Himilk.”

4.8.3. Contextual Comparison of Confronted Figure Handclasp and Gesture Phrases

Due to the fact that the ‘Abdiba’l fan handle has not been widely published and the fact that the gesture in a large portion of the scarabs is considered to be something other than a handclasp in the literature, there is very little scholarship on the Levantine Confronted Figure Handclasp as such. What has been done is sporadic and cursory, amounting for the most part to brief descriptions in published collections of art objects. However, other examples of handclasps from elsewhere in the Near East have been more extensively discussed, and some of these have been linked to biblical passages.

Many Mesopotamian cylinder seals, starting in the Sargonid period, show presentation scenes in which an interceding goddess grasps the suppliant by the hand and appears to be leading him into the presence of an enthroned deity.⁴⁶⁷ Similar scenes appear in New Kingdom (and later) Egypt on tomb walls, on coffins, and in the Book of the Dead: one deity leads a deceased person by the hand into the presence of an enthroned deity, usually Osiris.⁴⁶⁸ Induction scenes also occur in Egyptian temple reliefs, which show the king being led by two or more gods (one or more on each side) into the presence of a deity.⁴⁶⁹ Othmar Keel, through the use of figure

⁴⁶⁷ André Parrot, *Abraham and His Times*, transl. James Farley (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968), 25-28; Henriette Groenewegen-Frankfort, *Arrest and Movement: An Essay on Space and Time in the Representational Art of the Ancient Near East* (New York: Hacker Art Books, Inc., 1978), 165-66, 169.

⁴⁶⁸ For example, see Zahi Hawass, *The Royal Tombs of Egypt* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2006), 256; Bill Manley and Aidan Dodson, *Life Everlasting: National Museums Scotland Collection of Ancient Egyptian Coffins* (Edinburgh: National Museums Scotland, 2010), 54; Raymond O. Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), 34-35, 112.

⁴⁶⁹ Harold Hayden Nelson, *The Great Hypostyle Hall at Karnak, Volume 1, Part 1: The Wall Reliefs* (OIP 106; Chicago: Oriental Institute, 1981), pls. 50, 62, 78, 111, 137, 149, 179, 199. Scenes such as these also occur on New Kingdom scarabs found in Egypt and in the Levant: see Newberry, *Scarabs*, pl. 41 (no. 17); Keel, *Corpus*, Introduction, 214-15 (§584, with Abb. 447-49); Giveon, *ESWA*, 180-81 (no. 10), 30-31 (nos. 25, 26); Giveon, *SRE*,

captions and in-text citations, links Mesopotamian and Egyptian scenes such as these with biblical passages mentioning a divine handclasp, including Isaiah 45:1; Psalm 63:8; and Psalm 74:23.⁴⁷⁰ The descriptions of the divine handclasp in these passages employ the verbs *ʿḥaz* “grasp,” *heḥʿziq* “grasp,” and *tōmak* “hold.” In addition, a Hittite relief of king Tudkhaliya IV from Yazilikaya shows a god reaching his left arm over the king’s shoulder from behind and grasping his right hand to lead him.⁴⁷¹ Othmar Keel and John Eaton have linked this relief to the divine handclasp as mentioned in the Psalms.⁴⁷² In all of these cases, both participants in the gesture face the same direction, clasping adjacent hands (although the Hittite relief involves the extra aspect of the god reaching over the king’s shoulder).

A relief of Shalmaneser III from Nimrud, currently in the Iraq Museum in Baghdad (IM 65574) shows a scene that is more similar to the Levantine Confronted Figure Handclasp. Shown in the relief are Shalmaneser and another king, most likely Marduk-zakir-shumi (mentioned in an accompanying inscription), facing each other and clasping each other’s right hands.⁴⁷³ Keel and Viberg, who believe that the scene depicts these two kings ratifying a treaty, mention several supposed biblical parallels for the ratifying of a legal agreement by a “handshake.”⁴⁷⁴ Both Keel and Viberg cite 2 Kings 10:15; Ezra 10:19; Ezekiel 17:18; and Proverbs 6:1 in connection with this. These passages, with the exception of Proverbs 6:1, use the gesture phrase *nōtan yōd*. This is problematic, since *nōtan yōd* can also refer to the putting forth of the hand without a handclasp.

84, 86-87, pl. 7 (no. 98); Keel, *Corpus I*, 78-79 (no. 3), 704-5 (no. 39); Keel, *Corpus II*, 148-49 (no. 112), 262-63 (no. 106), 438-39 (no. 88), 520-21 (no. 9); Keel, *Corpus III*, 96-97 (no. 158), 130-31 (no. 237), 230-31 (no. 475), 272-73 (no. 568), 304-5 (no. 647), 328-29 (no. 703). Though many of these scarabs come from the Levant, they are excluded from our corpus, since they are entirely Egyptian in style and lack distinctively Levantine elements. Some of these temple reliefs and scarabs also show a form of confronted figure handclasp; see further below.

⁴⁷⁰ Keel, *Symbolism*, 198-99, 258-59.

⁴⁷¹ Akurgal, *Art of the Hittites*, pls. 84-85; *ANEP*, no. 541.

⁴⁷² Keel, *Symbolism*, 258-59; John H. Eaton, *Kingship and the Psalms* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1986), 143-44.

⁴⁷³ See Max Mallowan, *Nimrud and Its Remains* (London: Collins, 1966), 2:446-49.

⁴⁷⁴ Keel, *Symbolism*, 96; Viberg, *Symbols of Law*, 33-43. The analysis of this scene as the ratifying of a treaty is not universally agreed upon; see, for example, Pritchard in *ANESTP*, no. 821: “Under a canopy Shalmaneser III (right) greets another king...with a ‘handshake.’”

In chapter 2, we argued that *nʿtan yad* in these passages should indeed be translated “put forth the hand” (see section 2.2.20); we have also argued in this chapter that the gesture in these passages is to be connected with Palm Out (see section 4.3.7). In Proverbs 6:1, the relevant expression is *tʿqa tʿ lazzʿr kappēʿkə*, literally “you have struck your palms for the stranger.” Although some prefer to understand this as a reference to a handshake, this interpretation also presents problems.⁴⁷⁵

Thus there have been some attempts to connect the clasping of hands in iconography with biblical passages, but none have drawn on the Levantine iconographic data. Levantine art, unlike the Mesopotamian and Egyptian corpora, provides examples of only one kind of handclasp, namely between confronted figures. Levantine art thus compares best with the Shalmaneser relief and not with examples of leading by the hand in Mesopotamian and Egyptian presentation scenes. However, in their analyses of this relief, Keel and Viberg neglect the phrases that we group together as descriptions of the clasping of hands in a covenant context, namely the phrases employing the verbs *ʿḥaz* “grasp,” *heḥʿziʿq* “grasp,” and *tʿmak* “hold” (which phrases, as noted above, they link with the motif of leading by the hand).

We would suggest that the interpretations emerging from these studies of Keel, Eaton, and Viberg should be reoriented so that the Confronted Figure Handclasp is aligned with the phrases employing *ʿḥaz*, *heḥʿziʿq*, and *tʿmak*. Also, since the Hebrew Bible is a collection of Northwest Semitic texts, the iconographic sources that should be the focus of inquiry are those from the Levant, not those from Mesopotamia or Egypt. In the remainder of this section, we

⁴⁷⁵ See Viberg, *Symbols of Law*, 33, 35, 40-42; cf. Ackroyd, “yad,” in *TDOT*, 5:410-11; BDB, 1075. Based on the parallel uses of the expression *tʿqa ʿkap* “strike the palm” in Proverbs 17:18; 22:26, J. Fichtner, the editor of Proverbs in BHS, suggests emending *kpyk* in Proverbs 6:1 to *kpk* (singular). However, one could as easily retain the plural and understand *tʿqa ʿkap* in the other passages as referring to a clapping of one’s own hands together. Elsewhere, *tʿqa ʿkap* refers to a clapping of one hand on another in derision or jubilation (Nahum 3:19; Psalm 47:1). For our purposes, additional problems with this expression as used in reference to a performative gesture are its lateness (it is confined to the book of Proverbs, with one possible parallel in Job 17:3) and its absence from contemporary Northwest Semitic textual sources.

endeavor to support this new alignment through an examination of the contexts in which the iconographic gesture and the linguistic phrases occur, as well as of the gesture's details as depicted and described in the relevant sources.

4.8.3.1. Setting

The only example of the Confronted Figure Handclasp that includes concrete indicators of the setting is the 'Abdiba'1 ivory, which shows a veil or partition between the confronted figures and an altar to the right of the scene. These elements, especially the altar, indicate a temple context. The larger figure on the Pella scarab is shown seated on a throne, which might also imply a temple setting, if not a heavenly setting, as a place where the deity would normally reside.

The textual examples of the covenantal handclasp compare well with the data from iconography. Only a few examples, mostly from the Psalms, include information about the setting. In Psalm 41:13, the gesture phrase is parallel to *wattaṣṣi'beni' ləpəne'kə* "you cause me to stand before you"; the phrase "before you," in which God is the one being addressed, most likely implies a temple setting.⁴⁷⁶ In Psalms 63:9 and 73:23, there are nearby references to the Psalmist having worshipped God in the temple (see Psalms 63:3; 73:17), and it is possible that this is also the setting in which the handclasp was exchanged, although this is not certain. Altogether, it seems probable that the temple, as the place of God's residence, was normally the implied setting for the divine handclasp. Two passages, however, refer to a distant location,

⁴⁷⁶ According to Menahem Haran, the phrase *lipne' YHWH* "before Yahweh" implies the presence of a physical shrine in descriptions of ritual events, as the phrase "stems from the basic conception of the temple as a divine dwelling-place and actually belongs to the temple's technical terminology." See Menahem Haran, *Temples and Temple-Service in Ancient Israel: An Inquiry into the Biblical Cult Phenomena and the Historical Setting of the Priestly School* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1985), 26. M. D. Fowler, in "The Meaning of *lipne' YHWH* in the OT," *ZAW* 99 (1987): 384-90, contends that the phrase is often used in figurative ways without any implied reference to a physical shrine. However, in the case of Psalm 41:13, the use of this phrase with the verb *wattaṣṣi'beni'* "you cause me to stand" suggests that a physical location in God's presence is referred to.

calling attention to the idea that God can pick out his chosen (and form a covenant relationship with him) no matter how remote the latter's location is (Isaiah 41:9 "the ends of the earth"; Psalm 139:10 "the farthest limits of the sea").

The plant motif that appears between the confronted figures on the Hyksos scarabs and on the Biggio stamp seal raises interpretive possibilities that relate indirectly to the setting, although the motif is not a concrete indicator of a location or time. The plant motif is usually quite heavily stylized and not easy to identify with a particular species; in some cases such as the Biggio seal, an identification as a lotus is assured, but most often the motif could be understood equally well as a lotus, a papyrus stalk, a date palm, or simply a generalized plant.⁴⁷⁷ One possibility for understanding the significance of this motif is as a symbol of liminality. In ancient Near Eastern symbolism, single trees and pairs of trees were frequently associated with gates, communication between divine and human realms, and transition between realms.⁴⁷⁸ This might suggest that the tree on the Hyksos scarabs serves to differentiate between the two figures or between the realms to which they belong, which would work well with the interpretation of the scene as showing the reconciliation of Horus and Seth. However, a few considerations make this idea less likely. First, in many cases, the two figures are identical in all of their features. In the one example in which there is a clear difference in status between the participants, namely the Pella scarab, there is also no plant motif. Thus the plant motif cannot easily be interpreted as

⁴⁷⁷ Interpretations of the plant motif in the literature vary between a lotus, a papyrus bloom, and a date palm, even in cases in which the plant is depicted in identical fashion (see the literature cited for each example). For example, in the case of Rockefeller 35.3955, Rowe identifies the plant, which in this case has a thick trunk that widens at the bottom, as "a large palm or conventional lotus" (Rowe, *Catalogue*, 77).

⁴⁷⁸ See Marie-Thérèse Barrelet, "Une peinture de la cour 106 du palais de Mari," in *Studia Mariana*, ed. André Parrot (Leiden: Brill, 1950), 11-13, 25-27 ("fictional" trees flanking entrances to sacred space); David Oates, "The Excavations at Tell al Rimah, 1966," *Iraq* 29 (1967): 76-78, pl. 31a (comments on a relief of the interceding goddess Lama between two palm trees, understood by Oates as a "symbolic doorway" in which the goddess Lama stands to accept or turn away suppliants; he also cites examples of palm trees and door-posts being "interchangeable"); Karl Jaroš, *Die Stellung des Elohisten zur kanaänischen Religion* (OBO 4; Fribourg: University Press, 1974), 217-28 (the sacred tree as a place of revelation, transition to the realm of the dead, and theophany); Faulkner, *Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead*, 112 (a vignette from a Book of the Dead papyrus, Spell 117, showing a tree next to a false door leading to the world beyond).

differentiating between participants or sides of the scene. Second, the plant motif often resembles a smaller kind of plant (like a lotus or papyrus stalk) and not specifically a tree, and the comparative evidence does not clearly point to a liminal function of the smaller kinds of plants. Third, related to the second consideration, the plant motif only rarely bisects the whole scene. In some cases, it hovers above the joined hands of the participants, making it seem more like an auxiliary motif than a divider of the scene.

Another possibility, which agrees better with the internal evidence of the scarabs, is to interpret the plant motif as a divine symbol in the role of a witness or guarantee to the covenant into which the participants enter as they clasp hands. G. R. H. Wright has called attention to a function of sacred trees in the Hebrew Bible and in other West Semitic sources as places of covenant-making.⁴⁷⁹ More generally, as we have noted in our discussion of the plant motif as target of the Palms Out gesture (section 4.6.6.4), plants such as lotuses and date palms frequently function as symbols of deities in the ancient cultures of the Levant, as in Egypt. It would make sense to view a divine symbol in close proximity to a ritual handclasp as functioning in the role of a witness to the ritual, perhaps ready to guarantee or enforce the fulfillment of obligations that the participants take upon themselves. If this interpretation holds, it might imply that the ritual is enacted on sacred space, in the presence of a witnessing deity.

⁴⁷⁹ G. R. H. Wright, "Shechem and League Shrines," *VT* 21 (1971): 577-80. The only glyptic evidence with which Wright deals is that of cylinder seals, perhaps because the scarabs were unavailable to him. Also, he does not seem aware of the Confronted Figure Handclasp, nor does he mention textual examples of a handclasp in association with covenant-making. Keel, however, suggests that the covenant symbolism of trees discussed by Wright might apply to the Hyksos scarabs, and here he presupposes that the latter would involve a handclasp: see Keel, "Identifikation des Falkenköpfigen," 256n12.

4.8.3.2. Inscriptions

The examples of the Confronted Figure Handclasp from the Levant unfortunately do not contain inscriptions that are relevant to the gesture itself. This forces us to turn to comparative evidence. The closest formal parallels to the Levantine Confronted Figure Handclasp, both in terms of the style of representation and in terms of the overall context, are from Egypt. As mentioned above, Egyptian art provides many examples of leading by the hand, but there are also examples of confronted figures clasping hands. The latter are found in temple reliefs and tomb paintings.⁴⁸⁰ In these scenes, utterances spoken by the god grasping the king's hand are sometimes performative (such as "I hereby give you fullness of joy") or contain messages of reassurance (such as "I have come to you," spoken by attendant gods as the deceased king enters the presence of Osiris).⁴⁸¹ At least the latter type of utterance has obvious analogues in biblical passages that mention the covenant handclasp, in which Yahweh gives words of assurance to his chosen, such as "I have chosen you and have not rejected you" or "I am with you" (Isaiah 41:9-10, 13; 45:1-3). Since most of the passages mentioning this gesture describe it as a foregone event, it is usually difficult to detect whether the other ritual actions that are recounted were supposedly couched as performative utterances or were carried out in other ways; for example, Yahweh describes having "put his Spirit upon" his chosen in Isaiah 42:1. However, in Isaiah 45:1-4, Yahweh recounts having clasped Cyrus's hand and (among other things) given him an

⁴⁸⁰ In temple reliefs: Harold Hayden Nelson, *The Great Hypostyle Hall at Karnak, Volume 1, Part 1: The Wall Reliefs* (OIP 106; Chicago: Oriental Institute, 1981), pl. 115; Hawass, *Royal Tombs*, 35 (temple relief from Medinet Habu), 40, 159. For the motif on an Egyptian scarab seal from the Levant, see Keel, *Corpus II*, 406-7 (no. 11).

⁴⁸¹ Nelson, *Great Hypostyle Hall*, pl. 115 (*imn nb ns.wt t3.wy dd mdw [di].n=i n=k 3wt-[ib] nb r fnd=k nb t3.wy [...]* "Amun, lord of the thrones of the two lands; words spoken: 'I hereby [give] you fullness of joy to your nose, O lord of the two lands [...]"); Hawass, *Royal Tombs of Egypt*, 35 (*dd [mdw in] hnsw [...] di.n=i n=k nh w3s nb 3wt-ib nb mi r' dt* "[Words] spoken [by] Khonsu [...]: 'I hereby give you fullness of life and health and fullness of joy, like Re, forever'"), 159 (Anubis and Horus son of Isis, flanking Ramses I, both say *ii=i hri=k* "I have come to you"). On the translation of the *sdm.n=f* forms in these utterances as performatives with "hereby," see Battiscombe Gunn, *Studies in Egyptian Syntax* (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1924), 69-74; Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar*, §414.5; cf. John L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1975), 1-11.

epithet; this latter action could only have been done through some sort of performative utterance. Thus the Egyptian examples of utterances accompanying the Confronted Figure Handclasp agree with the utterances described in biblical examples of the covenant handclasp, and this lends some support to the connection between the iconographic gesture and the phrases used for the biblical gesture.

4.8.3.3. Connections to Mythological Events from Textual Sources

As mentioned above, the Hyksos scarabs showing a clasping of hands were interpreted by Rowe, following Petrie, as depicting the reconciling of Horus and Seth, an event that is alluded to in Egyptian literature. This theory is tempting in a number of ways. It would make sense in the context of Egyptianized Hyksos rule, since Seth was favored by the Hyksos, Horus being associated with traditional native Egyptian rule. However, while the evidence is insufficient to discount this theory, it is also insufficient to confirm it.⁴⁸² It could only apply in some cases, since some examples show figures of unequal status, females, or figures with no divine attributes. Further, it is by no means certain that this scene would have been understood by people of Northwest Semitic culture in terms of the Egyptian religion and worldview. Instead, the scene could have been associated with native Northwest Semitic concepts or mythology in a way unknown to us. We are therefore left with no definite instances in which a scene showing the Confronted Figure Handclasp can be matched with a specific event mentioned in literature.

⁴⁸² Vodoz, *Catalogue raisonné*, 74-75, mentions the hypothesis that this represents the reconciliation of Horus and Seth, referring to Rowe, but she gives the following arguments against the necessity of accepting this interpretation: (1) Seth is never represented on Egyptian scarabs until the Ramesside period; (2) given that the participants in most examples are identical, there is no reason why Seth would be represented in the same way as Horus. As Vodoz notes, however, the second argument is undermined by the fact that the scarab under discussion in this part of the *Catalogue raisonné* (PLU [99]) shows two different personages, one of them possibly being similar to Seth.

4.8.3.4. Participants

In the Confronted Figure Handclasp, it is usually impossible to distinguish between the target and the agent, since both parties appear to have both roles simultaneously. It is therefore more appropriate to speak of “participants” in the gesture, viewed as a single category. We may observe that the iconography of this gesture typically hides the aspect of whether one or the other participant initiates the gesture (an aspect that is usually easy to discern in texts, in which one or the other participant occurs as the subject of the verb “grasp”). Considering this aspect, it is theoretically possible to speak of an agent and a target. Nevertheless, given that almost all of the iconographic examples with which we are dealing show only an already-consummated form of the gesture, we may level the roles of agent and target in our comparison of texts and iconography.

The only two exceptions in the iconography, in which an agent and a target can be clearly differentiated, are the two cylinder seals Antakya 7759 (2) and PLU (36). In these cases, one figure grasps the other’s wrist, an action that is unilaterally initiated and maintained. In both instances, it is the female that grasps the male’s wrist. However, these examples are basically without textual parallel, as we shall see below.

Most examples of the Confronted Figure Handclasp are perfectly symmetrical: the two participants are of equal size, similar features, and identical posture, and their extended arms meet to form a symmetrical arc. This symmetrical composition implies that the two participants are of equal status (indeed, the equality of the participants may be part of what the composition is meant to assert). There are five instances, however, in which there are manifest differences in the size, attributes, or postures of the two participants. These five instances are laid out in table 30.

Table 30. Asymmetrical Examples of the Confronted Figure Handclasp

Art object	Participant on left	Participant on right
ʿAbdibaʿl fan handle	male king (or private person?)	male “priest” (or king or god?)
cylinder seal Antakya 7759 (2)	goddess	god
cylinder seal PLU (36)	female (goddess?)	god
Pella scarab	small, standing female	large, seated female (goddess?)
Biggio stamp seal	god	goddess

In the case of the ʿAbdibaʿl fan handle, the precise status of both participants is in doubt, but their relative status is most likely unequal, given their difference in dress and the fact that only one of them has an attendant. ʿAbdibaʿl himself may be a king—at any rate, his high status is indicated by the fact that he is shown with an attendant and by his ownership of the fan handle, which is a precious luxury item. It is also possible that the figure facing him is a king, although this possibility, if it is true, would tend to exclude the possibility that ʿAbdibaʿl himself is a king. Since ʿAbdibaʿl and his attendant appear to be approaching the figure on the right, we think it most likely that the figure on the right is either of higher status than ʿAbdibaʿl or acts as a representative of one who is of higher status (thus, if ʿAbdibaʿl is a king, then the figure on the right could be a god or a priest representing the god; if ʿAbdibaʿl is a private person, then the figure on the right could be a priest, a king, or a god).

Among the symmetrical examples, which form the majority of the corpus, several types are evident: the participants may have falcon heads (or, in one case, the head of an unidentified animal), which mark them as having divine status; crowns, which mark them as having royal status; skirts descending to the ankles, which mark them as females; or none of these attributes, signaling a male figure who is not specifically marked for divine or royal status. These types do

not overlap. In addition, the divine, royal, and unmarked figures may be standing or kneeling (there are no clear attestations of females in the kneeling posture⁴⁸³). This gives us a total of seven types of paired participants. These types are laid out in table 31. All of the examples here are scarab seals, with the exception of the conoid stamp seal IAA 73-101.

Table 31. Types of Symmetrical Confronted Figure Handclasp

Type	Attributes of participants	Art objects
god-god (standing)	falcon head, kilt with triangular projection	LIA EVII.59/37, Rockefeller 35.3955, PLU (96), PLU (97)
god-god (kneeling)	falcon (or other animal) head	BM 51902, BM L. 1023, PLU (98), PLU (99)
king-king (standing)	crown, kilt with triangular projection	MMA NN (2)
king-king (kneeling)	crown, kilt	Rockefeller 35.3989
male-male (standing)	kilt with or without triangular projection	IAA 72-5828/1, IAA 73-101, PTS 1-0111, Rockefeller 35.3957, Rockefeller 35.3978
male-male (kneeling)	kilt	PTS 1-0107, Rockefeller NN
female-female (standing)	close-fitting long skirt	Rockefeller 38.488

In all examples of the kneeling god type except one, both figures have falcon heads. The exception is PLU (99), in which the figure on the right has a head with pincers or horns, while the figure on the left has a falcon head. This example cannot be classified as asymmetrical, however, since there is no definable difference in the status of the two figures.

In every instance of the biblical covenant handclasp, the participants are God (Yahweh) and his mortal servant. This asymmetrical scenario has two possible parallels in the iconographic

⁴⁸³ It should be noted that there is some uncertainty as to the gender of the kneeling figures. Those with human heads usually have long hair, and the lack of detail for the legs makes it somewhat uncertain whether the lower dress is a short kilt or a long skirt. However, the falcon head is generally associated elsewhere with male and not female figures, as is the Red Crown (which the figures on Rockefeller 35.3989 wear). In general, descriptions of these scarabs in the literature assume that the kneeling figures are male. One exception is Giveon, *ESWA*, 80 (no. 60): “Two bird-headed women kneel...” (referring to BM L. 1023).

corpus: the ‘Abdiba‘l fan handle (which shows a priest, king, or god on the right clasping hands with a high-status person on the left) and the Pella scarab (which shows a goddess or queen on the right clasping hands with a mortal woman on the left). The cylinder seal PLU (36) may also show a comparable scenario (a god on the right and a female of uncertain status on the left), but it is the female on the left who grasps the god’s hand, whereas the biblical examples all clearly describe Yahweh as the initiator of the gesture.

As noted at the beginning of this contextual synthesis, the Hebrew Bible also contains allusions to what has been interpreted as a form of handclasp exchanged between mortals to formally seal an agreement. The Hebrew expressions involved include *tʿqa‘ kap* “strike the palm,” some instances of which are often interpreted as references to “striking the palm” of another person to make a deal, and *yʿd ləyʿd*, an idiom of uncertain meaning, literally “hand to hand” or “hand for hand.”⁴⁸⁴ These expressions, if understood as references to a handclasp exchanged between equals to performatively seal an agreement, might provide a parallel to the examples of the Confronted Figure Handclasp in which the participants are symmetrical. However, each of these expressions is subject to varying interpretations, so we hesitate to match these expressions with the iconographic sources. Further, the equal status of the participants in these scarabs, rather than representing a prior state of affairs, may be what these scarabs are intended to assert or perform. This would mean that the real status of the participants (that is, their status without the ritual handclasp) is irrelevant to the iconographic program of the scene, since the point of the scene is that the covenant handclasp puts the two participants, whoever they are, on equal grounds. If this is the case, then it would be fruitless to focus on the equal status of the participants in seeking to identify textual parallels.

⁴⁸⁴ Ackroyd, “yād,” in *TDOT* 5:410-11; Viberg, *Symbols of Law*, 33-43.

4.8.3.5. Details of the Gesture

All of the examples of the Confronted Figure Handclasp depict a joining of adjacent hands: the figure on the left extends his/her left hand, while the figure on the right extends his/her right. This means that each figure is shown to maximum advantage, and it allows for complete symmetry of the two figures (although the potential for symmetry is not always utilized).⁴⁸⁵ In this way, the Levantine depiction of the Confronted Figure Handclasp is exactly like that in Egypt. It is possible that Levantine iconography departs from realism to depict the gesture in this way, doing so for the sake of the compositional advantages just mentioned. We have seen similar departures from realism in the cases of Fist Up and Palm Out. It is typical for people facing each other to clasp right hands to make a covenant, as has been documented in modern societies in the Middle East and elsewhere.⁴⁸⁶ The relief of Shalmaneser III from Nimrud, discussed above, also shows both parties using their right hands. We can posit, therefore, that what is shown in Levantine iconography as a clasping of adjacent hands would have transpired in real life as a clasping of right hands.

This possibility keeps the way open for a comparison with the biblical covenant handclasp. As discussed in chapter 3 (sections 3.4.1.1 and 3.4.1.5), some passages mention God grasping the right hand of his chosen, while others mention God's right hand grasping his chosen, and grouping these passages together (based on various aspects of context) implies that both parties carry out the gesture with their right hands.⁴⁸⁷

Therefore, we find sufficient support for the connection between the covenant handclasp in biblical texts and the Confronted Figure Handclasp in Levantine art. There are parallels in the

⁴⁸⁵ Cf. Groenewegen-Frankfort, *Arrest and Movement*, 7-8; Teeter, *Presentation of Maat*, 22.

⁴⁸⁶ See Betty J. Bäuml and Franz H. Bäuml, *Dictionary of Worldwide Gestures*, second edition (Lanham, MD, and London: Scarecrow Press, 1997), 251-52 (examples of handclasps under "Agreement"), 305-7 (examples under "Oath").

⁴⁸⁷ Compare, for example, Isaiah 41:10 and 13; also compare Psalms 73:23 and 139:10.

setting, what can be gathered about the use of the gesture from internal and comparative evidence, and the participants. Further, the textual and iconographic evidence for the details of the gesture, while they may seem at first to be incongruent, are easily brought into harmony. We may thus view the Confronted Figure Handclasp and the phrases in question as representations of the same gesture, a clasping of the right hands in the context of a covenant.

4.9. Summary

We have examined seven gestures appearing in Northwest Semitic iconography, exploring the various contexts in which they occur. We have also drawn connections between iconographic gestures and gesture phrases used in texts. These connections are drawn on the basis of comparison between aspects of context, and the strength of the comparisons is strictly dependent on the adequacy of the contextual data in the iconographic and textual sources. Four of the seven gestures seem to endure in Levantine iconography throughout the period under consideration. These four gestures may be aligned with four groups of gesture phrases, as shown in table 32.

Table 32. Gestures in Iconography Linked to Gesture Phrases

Gesture	Section	Context	Corresponding Gesture Phrases
Fist Up	4.2	destruction or exertion of supernatural power	<i>nɔʔɔ^h yɔd (bəl) 'al-T</i> <i>nɔʔɔ^h zəro^a 'al-T</i> <i>šɔlah yɔd</i> <i>hiʔɔ^h yɔd</i> <i>heni^yp yɔd 'al-T_{add}</i> <i>heri^ym yɔd bəl</i> <i>nɔśɔ^ʔ yɔd/I 'al-T_{add}</i> <i>rɔmɔ^h yɔd 'al-T</i> <i>nɔʔɔ^h yɔmi^yn</i> <i>nɔtan yɔd bəT</i> <i>rɔmɔ^h yɔmi^yn</i>
Palm Out	4.3	oath (or divine decree)	<i>nɔśɔ^ʔ yɔd (+adv)_{oath}</i> <i>nɔtan yɔd ləP_{obl}</i> <i>heri^ym yɔd 'el-T</i> <i>heni^yp yɔd 'al-T_{ref}</i>
		pledge of allegiance	<i>nɔtan yɔd (+adv)_{pledge}</i>
		presentation of offering	<i>nɔtan yɔd ləT</i>
		surrender	<i>nɔtan yɔd (Jer 50:15)</i>
Palms Out	4.6	prayer	<i>nɔśɔ^ʔ yɔdayim (+adv)_{prayer}</i> <i>nɔśɔ^ʔ kappayim</i> <i>pɔraś kappayim (adv)T_{dir} 'el-/ləT_{add}</i> <i>peras kappayim</i> <i>peras yɔdayim 'el-T</i> <i>šitʔah kappayim</i> <i>heri^yš yɔdayim</i> <i>mo 'al yɔdayim</i>
Confronted Figure Handclasp	4.8	covenant	<i>hɛh^ɛzi^yq (bə)R T ləP</i> <i>tɔmak (+adv)_{covenant}</i> <i>tɔmɔkɔ^h yɔmi^yn bəT</i> <i>'ɔhaz bəR T</i> <i>'ɔh^azɔ^h yɔmi^yn T</i>

Note: For the precise meanings and attestations of the gesture phrases in the last column, see chapters 2-3.

The four iconographic gestures occur with about the same frequency in the iconographic corpus as the corresponding groups of gesture phrases in the textual corpus. This supports the premise

that Northwest Semitic texts and Levantine iconography are mutually harmonious witnesses to Northwest Semitic ritual practice.

Three other iconographic gestures which have been discussed are more limited in their distribution and seem to have no parallel in Northwest Semitic literature. These are Palm In (section 4.4), Palm Sideways (section 4.5), and Palms In/Sideways (section 4.7). As far as Levantine art itself goes, these three gestures are known to occur only on Bronze Age cylinder seals. Palm In and Palm Sideways seem to be contextually similar to Palm Out, while Palms In/Sideways is similar in some instances to Palm Out and in others to Palms Out. We have suggested that Palm In, Palm Sideways, and Palms In/Sideways merged with other gestures and thus disappeared from Northwest Semitic practice by the Iron Age. This would explain the absence of these gestures both from the Iron Age artistic record and from contemporary textual sources (as far as the textual descriptions reveal).

In the contextual syntheses in this chapter, we have generally set aside the issue of the gestures' functions, focusing instead on objectively identifiable elements of context in order to establish links between sources. In chapter 5, we marshal the combined data of texts and iconography as we take up the issue of gesture function.

Chapter 5

Gesture Form, Symbolism, and Ritual Function

5.1. Issues of Interpretation

In chapter 2, we broke down the examples of various gesture phrases into types based on differences in context. Then, in chapter 3, we grouped the full gesture phrases pertaining to each type into clusters based on commonality of context. Finally, in chapter 4, we matched these clusters with iconographic gestures that share the same contexts. The combining of textual and iconographic data in chapters 2-4 enables us to take a crucial step in understanding Northwest Semitic gestures, namely a step from “gestures” as we encounter them in the form of linguistic phrases or artistic representations to gestures as deployed and encountered in the ancient culture. To be sure, our understandings of the latter will inevitably be imperfect. However, we can at least ensure that our reconstructions align with the available textual and iconographic witnesses to the form of the gesture and with the full range of contexts attested in both media. We are thus in a position to compare our knowledge of these gestures with prior interpretations and to explore how the gestures might prompt new understandings of ritual nonverbal communication among Northwest Semitic people.

The most influential modern interpreters of the Northwest Semitic gestures discussed in chapters 2-4 have operated under the assumption that human physiology and the historical realities of social interaction place natural limits on the gestures’ range of meaning. According to these interpreters, the key to a ritual gesture’s significance lies in its origins as a response to emotional stimuli or as a utilitarian form of social interaction. For example, Mayer Gruber suggests that the Hebrew gesture phrases *p̄raś kappayim* “spread the palms” and *p̄raś*

kappayim “spread out the palms” are “derived from a gesture of pleading that one’s empty hands be filled.”¹ For this suggestion, Gruber cites Édouard Dhorme, an Assyriologist who made a similar suggestion about Mesopotamian prayer gestures: “On emploie aussi l’expression *pitû upnâ* ‘ouvrir les poings’ pour marquer le geste de celui qui tend les mains vers la divinité, les paumes ouvertes pour recevoir les grâces quémendées.”² For Dhorme, the “nature” of prayer is synonymous with its “concept primitif,” from which spring the gestures used in prayer as well as the words used to describe prayer (he discusses the etymology of these words at length).³ While Gruber is also primarily concerned with origins, he is explicitly influenced by an evolutionary approach that treats gesture as an “expression of the emotions” rooted in human physiology and ultimately in phylogenetic inheritance.⁴ In the view of both Dhorme and Gruber, therefore, the meaning of the gesture is to be sought in the distant past, at a stage when the gesture was a spontaneous response to a concrete need.

Another example of origin-focused interpretation is that of Othmar Keel. According to Keel, ritual gestures derive from emotional responses to encounters with the holy. Thus Keel describes the Palms Out gesture as originally “exorcistic,” expressing an “attempt to restrain a superior, numinous opposite by means of conjuring, thus rendering it serviceable or averting it.”⁵ Keel’s interpretation is rooted in Rudolf Otto’s conception of the “numinous” aspect of the holy as something “wholly other,” something which cannot be described by rational doctrine but which can be recognized (among other things) by the emotional response of awe which it evokes;

¹ Gruber, *Nonverbal Communication*, 35-36.

² Édouard Dhorme, *Les religions de Babylonie et d’Assyrie* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1945), 249.

³ Édouard (Paul) Dhorme, *La religion assyro-babylonienne* (Paris: Librairie Victor Lecoffre, 1910), 247-49; cf. Dhorme, *Religions*, 248-49.

⁴ Gruber, *Nonverbal Communication*, 1-4. Gruber refers here to two classics in nonverbal communication studies: John Bulwer, *Chirologia: Or the Naturall Language of the Hand* (London: Thomas Harper, 1644); and Charles Darwin, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (London: John Murray, 1872). More recent scholarship following this approach is collected in R. A. Hinde, ed., *Non-Verbal Communication* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972). See further below.

⁵ Keel, *Symbolism*, 313.

this feature of the numinous is what Otto calls *mysterium tremendum*.⁶ Otto sets up a conceptual framework in which “rational” religion is expressed through words, while the experience of the numinous can only be expressed by nonverbal means. Explaining how the “numinous basis and background to religion” can be awakened between people, Otto writes,

This is least of all possible by mere verbal phrase or external symbol; rather we must have recourse to the way all other moods and feelings are transmitted, to a penetrative imaginative sympathy with what passes in the other person’s mind. More of the experience lives in reverent attitude and gesture, in tone and voice and demeanor, expressing its momentousness, and in the solemn devotional assembly of a congregation at prayer, than in all the phrases and negative nomenclature which we have found to designate it.⁷

For Otto and Keel, then, ritual gestures are most fundamentally responses to an experience of the numinous; yet, recognizing that these gestures can be repeated without necessarily being attached to an emotional cause, Keel is careful to locate this interpretation at the “base” or “beginning” of the biblical religious tradition. In the case of gestures mentioned in the Psalms, the beginning is “God’s appearance and Israel’s beholding of him.”⁸

In pursuing the interpretation of ritual gestures as a matter of “derivation” or “origin,” these interpretations bring up the concept for which anthropological studies use the term *ritualization*. Precise uses of this term vary (see below); basically, it refers to a process by which a behavior develops from its “original and ostensible” function to take on a ritual or ritual-like character.⁹

Approaches to ritualization that are important to the study of hand gestures may be broadly grouped into two traditions. The first tradition arises from the ethological work of Julian

⁶ Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1950), 1-59.

⁷ Otto, *Idea of the Holy*, 60.

⁸ Keel, *Symbolism*, 308.

⁹ *Oxford English Dictionary* online (accessed December 3, 2013), sub “ritualization,” definitions 1 and 3.

Huxley, K. Z. Lorenz, and I. Eibl-Eibesfeldt as articulated in meetings of the Royal Society of London and published in two important volumes: *A Discussion on Ritualization of Behaviour in Animals and Man*, published as volume 251 of the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London* (1966); and the book *Non-Verbal Communication*, edited by R. A. Hinde (1972). As defined by Julian Huxley in the first of these volumes, ritualization in animal behavior is

the adaptive formalization or canalization of emotionally motivated behaviour, under the teleonomic pressure of natural selection so as: (a) to promote better and more unambiguous signal function, both intra- and inter-specifically; (b) to serve as more efficient stimulators or releasers of more efficient patterns of action in other individuals; (c) to reduce intra-specific damage; and (d) to serve as sexual or social bonding mechanisms.¹⁰

According to Huxley, the same basic concept applies to “adaptive formalization and canalization of motivated human activities so as to secure more effective communicatory (‘signalling’) function, reduction of intra-group damage, or better intra-group bonding.”¹¹ Lorenz and Eibl-Eibesfeldt, explicitly elaborating on the work of Huxley, developed the concept of human “cultural ritualization,” the process by which inborn physiological responses develop into various specific gestures that have culturally distinct meanings. The main mechanism of cultural ritualization is tradition, which plays a role analogous to that of genetic inheritance in the phylogenetically evolved ritualization of other animals; however, according to Lorenz and Eibl-Eibesfeldt, tradition itself is “guided by phylogenetic adaptations.”¹² More recently, Ronald Grimes has articulated a more nuanced approach to human ritualization within the framework

¹⁰ Julian Huxley, “Introduction,” *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London, Series B: Biological Sciences* 251 (1966): 250.

¹¹ Huxley, “Introduction,” 258.

¹² K. Z. Lorenz, “Evolution of Ritualization in the Biological and Cultural Spheres,” *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London, Series B: Biological Sciences* 251 (1966): 280; I. Eibl-Eibesfeldt, “Similarities and Differences between Cultures in Expressive Movements,” in *Non-Verbal Communication*, ed. R. A. Hinde (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 303-4.

established by Huxley. Grimes describes ritualization as a continually-occurring process or “mode of ritual sensibility” which may lead to “ritualizing” (that is, the conscious creation of ritual) if it becomes recognized and “actively incubated.”¹³

The second tradition of approaches to ritualization arises from the work of Pierre Bourdieu and Catherine Bell. Rather than conceiving of ritual behavior as a product of “formalization and canalization” from an original physiological motivation, this tradition views ritual behavior as a product of strategic differentiation that in turn produces a structuring influence on the ritual context. According to Bell,

Ritualization, the production of ritualized acts, can be described, in part, as that way of acting that sets itself off from other ways of acting by virtue of the way in which it does what it does. Even more circularly, it can be described as the strategic production of expedient schemes that structure an environment in such a way that the environment appears to be the source of the schemes and their values.¹⁴

A key aspect of this kind of approach in relation to the present study is that it focuses on the *creative* character of ritual action, as opposed to ritual action’s character as a *semblance* of other action (the focus of the tradition represented by Huxley, Lorenz, and Eibl-Eibesfeldt). In addition, this approach portrays ritual action as fundamentally situated in a particular context (an activity “abstracted from its immediate context” is “not quite the same activity”) and as “inherently strategic, manipulative, and expedient.”¹⁵ We will have more to say about the implications of this approach to ritualization in the discussion that follows.

¹³ Ronald Grimes, *Beginnings in Ritual Studies* (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1995), 40-44, 60-62, 66-69

¹⁴ Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 140. Cf. Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 82-83.

¹⁵ Bell, *Ritual Theory*, 81-82.

Although neither Gruber nor Keel uses the term *ritualization*, both employ an equivalent concept. Implicit in Gruber's suggestion that *p̄ras kappayim* and *peras kappayim* derive from "a gesture of pleading that one's empty hands be filled" is the assumption that the purpose of the gesture is to communicate information about the performer's emotional state, similar to a sentence with propositional content. There is no expectation to literally receive something in the hands; the gesture merely communicates the anxious hope to receive a blessing *as if* in the form of a concrete object placed in the hands. Indeed, the propositional function of the gesture allows for its further development into a purely verbal idiom: one of the consequences of the development of written literature, according to Gruber, is "an attempt to compensate for the loss of postures, gestures, and facial expressions" in the written medium, which leads to "verbal descriptions of these nonverbal phenomena" becoming detached from the behaviors themselves and used as "idioms denoting the mental states which the gestures, postures, and facial expressions convey."¹⁶ The idioms *p̄ras kappayim* and *peras kappayim* can denote merely being in a state of supplication or prayer (without necessarily implying the performance of a gesture). Thus Gruber seems to envision a four-stage process of development from a utilitarian gesture to a verbal idiom:

1. ostensible utilitarian gesture, e.g. putting out hands to be filled
2. symbolic ritual gesture, e.g. spreading palms to express supplication
3. coupling with verbal idiom(s), e.g. *p̄ras kappayim* "spread the palms (in supplication)"
4. verbal idiom used without gesture, e.g. *p̄ras kappayim* = "supplication"

The first transition in this process corresponds to what others call "ritualization," while the subsequent two stages clarify the nature of the transition as one of abstraction from a utilitarian gesture to a propositional sign (akin to a verbal idiom).

¹⁶ Gruber, *Nonverbal Communication*, 7-8.

Keel's approach, while differing from that of Gruber in some respects, similarly conceives of ritual gestures as having been abstracted from a spontaneous action into a formalized symbolic sign. For example, concerning prostration (or "proskynesis"), Keel writes,

Proskynesis is at base a fear-response. Faced with the overpowering experience of the holy, man escapes into death. Regarded thus, falling down is equivalent to the death-feigning reflex well-known to behavioral research...When proskynesis pales into a conventional gesture, it becomes a gesture of greeting. It has the character of a *rite de passage*. It represents the passage from profane life into life before God or the king. Between the two spheres lies the weak swoon, "death."¹⁷

In this formulation, the original fear-response "pales" into a symbolic sign; it becomes a symbol of death and can function similarly to a password in enabling transitions across boundaries of sacred space. In like fashion, stretching out the hand with a weapon, originally a utilitarian smiting gesture, is conventionalized into an "Ideogramm" or sign of victory, albeit one with performative power (cf. Keel's terms *wirkmächtige Siegeszeichen* and *signa efficacia*).¹⁸

The approaches of Gruber and Keel fit most comfortably, in terms of their theoretical orientations, within the tradition represented by Huxley, Lorenz, and Eibl-Eibesfeldt. In all cases, ritual action is viewed as a semblance of other behavior, the ritual action having "derived" (Gruber) or "paled" (Keel) from the other behavior through a process of formalization. It is interesting that Gruber, trained as a philologist, understands this process as culminating in a

¹⁷ Keel, *Symbolism*, 310. Cf. Keel, *Welt der altorientalischen Bildsymbolik*, 289. The word *pales* is a direct translation of *verblaßt* in the German original.

¹⁸ Othmar Keel, *Wirkmächtige Siegeszeichen im Alten Testament: Ikonographische Studien zu Jos 8:18-26; Ex 17:8-13; 2 Kön 13:14-19 und 1 Kön 22:11* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1974), 18-21, 82. See especially pages 18-19: "[es ist] nur das Ideogramm der ausgestreckten Waffe (Jos 8,18 und 26), das den profanen Kampf als Jahwekrieg deutet. Denn es ist Jahwe, der Josua befiehlt, die Hand mit der Waffe gegen Ai auszustrecken (Jos 8,18). Josua hält sie ausgestreckt bis alle Bewohner von Ai gebannt sind (8,26). Die zeitliche Koinzidenz impliziert offensichtlich eine kausale Verbindung. Die ausgestreckte Waffe ermöglicht den totalen Sieg..." Here Keel's focus is clearly on the gesture of holding out the weapon. This is distinct from his more extensive and more widely noted description of the sickle sword as an "Ideogramm" (something that could outlive the actual use of the sickle sword in the Near East, thus making its way into Joshua 8): Keel, *Wirkmächtige Siegeszeichen*, 34-76; Robert G. Boling, review in *JBL* 95 (1976): 647-48; Helga Weippert, review in *Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins* 91 (1975): 87.

linguistic sign; while Keel, a specialist in iconography, describes the final product of ritualization as an “Ideogramm.” Both understand ritualization as a transition ultimately to a static sign, one that encodes information symbolically in the same manner as a word or pictorial symbol. In this respect, Gruber and Keel are in alignment with an older tradition that analyzes gestures as a “language” of abstract symbolic signs. This older tradition is exemplified by John Bulwer, whose book *Chirologia: Or the Naturall Language of the Hand* (1644) includes a chart matching pictures of various hand gestures with Latin speech verbs (*supplico, oro, ploro, etc.*), and more recently by Heinz Demisch, who argues that a ritual lifting of the hands is an abstract sign for “life” (thus lifting the hands in prayer can be read as imploring the deity to grant life to the supplicant).¹⁹

The foregoing discussion shows that the interpretations of Gruber and Keel are situated within a tradition that seeks to explain ritual gestures in terms of iconic links to natural behaviors, both of humans and of other animals. Gruber and Keel are not the only ones who adopt this approach, but they are the most influential. In our view, this approach is useful in generating heuristic interpretations of ritual gestures, particularly interpretations centering on the symbolic and iconic facets of the gestures. There are some ways, however, in which this approach is less than fully satisfying. First, there are empirical problems in the specific cases dealt with in this study. On one hand, when ritual gestures of lifting, extending, and clasping the hand(s) are compared with other human behavior, the approach is overdetermined, as the great variety of

¹⁹ John Bulwer, *Chirologia: Or the Naturall Language of the Hand* (London: Thomas Harper, 1644), 151, 155; Heinz Demisch, *Erhobene Hände: Geschichte einer Gebärde in der bildenden Kunst* (Stuttgart: Urachhaus, 1984). The latter works make claims of intercultural commonality for the gestures and their symbolism; yet the interpretations’ appeal to abstract symbolism (as contrasted with the Huxleyan appeal to iconic links with natural behavior) would imply that the commonality is due to diffusion or contact. It is perhaps because of the unverifiable nature of these claims that the respective works, while appealing to popular audiences, have not gained wide acceptance among modern scholars of the ancient world.

interpretations attests (see below).²⁰ On the other hand, when these gestures are compared with the behavior of other animals, the approach is drastically underdetermined. In brief, we have not been able to find any reliably-reported example of natural behavior among primates, or any other animals, that comes close to the human ritual gestures that are the focus of this study.²¹ Most studies in the tradition represented by Huxley, Lorenz, and Eibl-Eibesfeldt focus on movements of the head and trunk: smiling or baring the teeth, raising the eyebrow, phallic displays, and so on. Thus the whole phylogenetic approach is of questionable relevance to the topic of ritual hand gestures, while ontogenetic and cultural approaches yield an abundance of data without providing a way to resolve the hermeneutical dilemmas that arise.

Second, the kind of approach adopted by Gruber and Keel misses something fundamental about the nature of ritual hand gestures, namely how they function specifically as ritual gestures. Regardless of the insights to be gained from links between ritual gestures and other behaviors that are emotionally motivated, the fact remains that the ritual gestures are not these other behaviors. They differ both in context and in function. For example, Keel's account of the Palms Out gesture as a vestige of an "exorcistic" reaction to the appearance of a holy being does not explain what the gesture accomplishes as a repeated ritual action that may not necessarily follow

²⁰ There is a theoretical as well as an empirical dimension to this problem. Indeed, a general characteristic of ritual gestures is their endless potential to symbolize. Compare Bourdieu, *Outline*, 120: "The language of the body, whether articulated in gestures or, *a fortiori*, in what psychosomatic medicine calls 'the language of the organs', is incomparably more ambiguous and more overdetermined than the most overdetermined uses of ordinary language. This is why ritual 'roots' are always broader and vaguer than linguistic roots, and why the gymnastics of ritual, like dreams, always seems richer than the verbal translations, at once unilateral and arbitrary, that may be given of it."

²¹ One occasionally finds a statement to the effect that the Palms Out gesture, often pictured in Egyptian art as being performed by baboons toward the sun disk, relates to the behavior of the hamadryas baboon at dawn. See, for example, Hans Bonnet, *Reallexikon der ägyptischen Religionsgeschichte* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1952), 7, sub "Affe"; Lothar Störk, "Pavian," in *LdÄ*, 4:917; Dieter Kessler, "Monkeys and Baboons," in *Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*, 2:428-32; Herman te Velde, "De Symboliek van Apen en Bavianen in de oud-egyptische Cultuur en Religie," *Phoenix* 48/1 (2002): 32-35. The behavior mentioned in these sources includes "socializing," general agitation, and barking or raising a cry; however, we are unaware of any reliable documentation, in these sources or elsewhere, of the *papio hamadryas* actually raising its hands toward the sun as depicted in Egyptian art. The present author is likewise unaware of gestures like Fist Up, Palm Out, or the Confronted Figure Handclasp being performed among non-human primates or other species, although he disclaims scientific expertise in animal behavior.

a theophany. The kind of approach followed by Bourdieu and Bell hits closer to the mark by focusing on how ritual is progressively set apart (and thus always different) from other action.²²

This leads to the third way in which the origin-focused approach is less than optimal. In viewing ritual gestures as static signs that are only vestiges of living action, Gruber and Keel confuse the functions of gesture tokens in the textual and iconographic sources with the functions of the ritual gestures themselves. As noted above, they analyze ritual gestures in terms similar to verbal idioms and iconographic signs, as isolated things whose primary function is symbolic.²³ This analysis is accurate in the sense that gestures, like words and conventional iconographic images, signify through a symbolic mode. However, in addition to being things, ritual gestures also do things, accomplishing ends in a ritual interaction. Bell aptly describes ritual in terms of its function in structuring the performer's environment.²⁴ Similarly, Bernard Hibbitts describes gestures used in legal transactions not just as static signs but as forms of effective movement, constituting a legally binding act while at the same time giving visual shape to the various media deployed in the interaction.²⁵

In accordance with the insights put forward by Bourdieu, Bell, and Hibbitts, we would suggest that the ritual gestures that are the topic of this study can be profitably viewed as dynamic forms of work by which the agent actively shapes the ritual context. A ritual hand gesture creates an interactive medium between ritual participants (who are defined as participants

²² Bell, *Ritual Theory*, 90-91, 140-41.

²³ We are distinguishing here between symbolic idioms and signs on the one hand and actual inscriptions and iconographic artifacts on the other. In Near Eastern culture, the latter do function performatively in a manner similar to gestures themselves (see below).

²⁴ Bell, *Ritual Theory*, 109-10, 116, 140-41.

²⁵ Bernard J. Hibbitts, "‘Coming to Our Senses’: Communication and Legal Expression in Performance Cultures," *Emory Law Journal* 41 (1992): 906-7, 943, 949-52, 958-59. Hibbitts focuses on what he terms "performance cultures," or cultures in which performative acts are channeled primarily through multisensory media rather than the written word; the definition explicitly includes biblical Israel ("Coming to Our Senses," 882-83). In our view, Hibbitts's conceptualization may be applied to ritual behavior in general, independent of any attempt to define this or that group of people as "a performance culture."

by means of the gesture). Like the action of a workman’s tools, or like a potter’s hand motions in contact with the clay, the gesture creatively structures the ritual context. This creative structuring may include acting in concert with the agent’s speech to exert change in the status of the participants.

As an example of how this insight plays out, we can take a closer look at the gesture of “spreading the palms” in prayer in Isaiah 1:15. The verse reads as follows:

u^wbəpəriškem kappe^ykem ’a‘li^ym ‘e^ynay mikkem
gam ki^y-tarbu^w təpillo^h ’e^ynenni^y šome^a‘
yəde^ykem dōmi^ym mōle’u^w

When you spread out your palms, I will hide my eyes from you;
even as you keep on praying, I am not listening.
Your hands are full of blood!

The poetic structure of the verse, which alternates between actions attributed to the second person plural and reactions attributed to the first person singular, reflects a presupposition that the gesture itself creates a two-part interaction structure, like the speech act of prayer. Related to this creation of a two-part interaction structure, there is evident here a presupposition that the gesture attracts visual attention, just as prayer attracts auditory attention; note the correspondence between the gesture and the mention of the eyes in the first bicolon, then between the speech act and the mention of listening in the second bicolon. Yahweh’s response is unfavorable: he suppresses his sight and hearing. This, however, ironically underscores the fact that the gesture has attracted his attention. The focus is specifically on the hands, and purity is somehow at issue, since the infelicity of the gesture is ascribed to the agents’ hands being “full of blood.”²⁶ The

²⁶ One way to interpret this is that the gesture, as understood by Yahweh and Isaiah, is actually a display of the purity of the hands; this interpretation is adopted, for example, by John Tvedtnes (see below). However, it is not certain whether the display of purity was a core function of the gesture or was only an incidental result that was exploited in this case.

interaction structure which the gesture creates is further assumed to be one in which the agent appears as a supplicant, one who anticipates not only attention from the addressee but favorable attention (such as would lead to giving aid or bestowing a blessing).

In addition, we can note the choice of the form *pərəs* “spread out” (in *u^wbəpəriškem* “when you spread out your palms”), a D-stem infinitive. The use of gesture phrases with the D-stem form (Isaiah 1:15; 25:10-11; 65:1-2; Jeremiah 4:31; Psalm 143:6; Lamentations 1:17) can be compared with the phrase *pəras kappayim* “spread the palms,” which employs the corresponding G-stem form (Exodus 9:29, 33; 1 Kings 8:22, 38, 54; Psalm 44:21-22; Job 11:13-15; Ezra 9:5; 2 Chronicles 6:12-13, 29-30).²⁷ It is possible that the D-stem form denotes the performance of an especially vigorous gesture, indexing especially intense desperation.²⁸

Thus, in Isaiah 1:15, the gesture shapes the environment by creating a two-part interaction structure, further casting the agent in the role of a supplicant and the addressee in the role of one with power to judge and to give aid. Attention is focused on the supplicant’s hands. Finally, the gesture can perhaps be modulated by increasing the degree or rapidity of movement to index intense desperation; this would correspondingly increase the effectiveness of the call for attention. This shaping of the interaction structure lays out a path for the addressee’s subsequent action, as the latter will be construed as either a favorable or an unfavorable response to the agent’s action.

This fresh consideration of the performative nature of Northwest Semitic ritual gestures also enables us to reconsider the functions of these gestures’ tokens as transmitted through artistic media. Recent work by Zainab Bahrani has called attention to the performative (rather than strictly representational) nature of ancient Near Eastern iconography; thus iconographic

²⁷ These passages are quoted and discussed in sections 2.2.21 to 2.2.23.

²⁸ For further discussion, see section 3.3.2.3.

iterations of ritual gestures may function in society in a way similar to the gestures themselves.²⁹ We have shown in chapter 4 that the functions of gestures often coincide with the functions of artistic media that show figures performing the gestures. For example, the smiting god shown on the Arslan Tash plaque coincides with the apotropaic spell inscribed on the plaque; it is as if the figure is there to carry out the apotropaic function envisaged in the spell. Stamp seals commonly bear an image of a standing figure in Palm Out (who may represent a god, a king, or the official who owns the seal), so that a performative stamping of the seal simultaneously transmits the performative gesture, both actions serving to authenticate the transaction recorded on the stamped document. The use of these media, therefore, is one way in which centers of authority in society (in the visual form of deities and their human representatives) extend their structuring influence into multiple interactive events, alongside the actual use of gestures.³⁰

In keeping with the heuristic impact of previous studies as well as the new understandings proposed here, we pursue a threefold plan in the subsections of this chapter. First, in the subsection for each gesture, we list previous interpretations, including ones that have been formulated in general terms but have not been specifically applied to the examples in question. We refine all these interpretations to the extent possible by putting them into dialogue with each other and by measuring them against the data gathered in chapters 2-4. Second, we expound the function of the gesture as a dynamic form of work that relates indexically to the ritual contexts attested in textual and iconographic sources. Third, we explore how the function of the gesture interacts with the functions of artistic media that show the gesture.

²⁹ Zainab Bahrani, *Rituals of War: The Body and Violence in Mesopotamia* (New York: Zone Books, 2008), 50-55. Whereas Keel described the stretching out of the hand with a weapon as an efficacious sign (Keel, *Wirkmächtige Siegeszeichen*, 18-21, 82), this description would be just as aptly applied, if not more so, to the iconographic motif of this gesture.

³⁰ Like verbal forms, these gestures can function as “ritual centers of semiosis” that “come to exert a structuring, value-conferring influence on any particular event of discursive interaction.” See Michael Silverstein, “‘Cultural’ Concepts and the Language-Culture Nexus,” *Current Anthropology* 45 (2004): 623.

Our focus in this chapter is on those gestures that are relatively widely attested in the Northwest Semitic material and that appear in both texts and iconography. Other gestures will be mentioned where relevant. As in chapters 3-4, we proceed according to the form of the gesture, from the one-handed gestures Fist Up and Palm Out to the two-handed gesture Palms Out, and finally to the Confronted Figure Handclasp.

5.2. Fist Up

In chapters 2-3, we separated out and then linked together eleven phrases that describe a raising or extending of the hand in the context of destruction or exertion of supernatural power:

nṣṭḥ yḥd (bəl) ‘*al-T* “extend the hand (with I) against T”³¹
nṣṭḥ zərō^a ‘“extend the arm”
šḵlah yḥd “stretch out the hand”
hiṭṭḥ yḥd “extend the hand”
heni^yp yḥd ‘*al-T_{add}* “elevate the hand against T_{add}”
heri^ym yḥd bəl “raise the hand with I”
nṣṣ[’] yḥd/I ‘*al-T_{add}* “lift up the hand/I against T_{add}”
rḥmḥ yḥd ‘*al-T* “of the hand, be high against T”
nṣṭḥ yḥmi^yn “extend the right hand”
nṣtan yḥd bəT “put forth the hand against T”
rḥmḥ yḥmi^yn “of the right hand, be high”

The most frequently attested phrase by far is the first one, *nṣṭḥ yḥd (bəl)* ‘*al-T* “extend the hand (with I) against T,” while some phrases, like *nṣṭḥ yḥmi^yn* “extend the right hand,” have only one attestation. Section 4.2 was devoted to showing that these eleven phrases describe the gesture that is associated in Levantine iconography with the “smiting god” motif, which gesture we refer to as Fist Up.

³¹ For the abbreviations used herein to denote the constituents of gesture phrases, including *I* for “Instrument” and *T* for “Target,” see section 2.1.

At least four different interpretive avenues for the Fist Up gesture (or of its descriptions in texts, whether or not these have been recognized as descriptions of Fist Up) have been proposed:

1. Utilitarian raising of fist or weapon to strike physically at close quarters. This interpretation is implied in translations employing the word “strike” (instead of the more ambiguous “smite”) in passages that mention the gesture. The passages include instances of mortals performing the gesture at close quarters to the Target (Exodus 7:17, 20; Numbers 20:11). When God performs the gesture, it is interpreted in a figurative sense, as in Exodus 3:20 NIV: “So I will stretch out my hand and strike the Egyptians with all the wonders that I will perform among them.” The interpretation is also frequently found in descriptions of art works showing the smiting god motif, especially those examples in which a target is clearly shown in the scene.
2. Menacing or threatening. Some biblical commentaries refer to the gesture in various passages as a “threatening gesture.”³² Keel states that *nṣṭḥ yṯd* and *heniṣp yṯd* (in cases in which the hand does not hold a sword) denote a “threat gesture” (“Drohgestus”).³³ Ackroyd analyzes the gesture behind the phrases *nṣṭḥ yṯd (bʿl)* ‘*al-T* and *nṣṣṯ yṯd/I* ‘*al-T_{add}* as “expressing hostility.”³⁴ Cornelius uses the term “menacing god” for the motif that is more widely known as the “smiting god,” basing this on the absence of an explicit target in the majority of Levantine examples.³⁵
3. Sign of victory. This interpretation is found, for example, in NIV’s expansive rendering of the gesture phrase in Micah 5:8 (English 5:9): “Your hand will be lifted up in triumph over your enemies.” Keel argues that Joshua’s gesture in the battle against Ai (Joshua 8:18-19, 26), involving the stretching out of the

³² Otto Kaiser, *Isaiah 13-39: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1974), 167; H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Isaiah, Volume I: Chapters 1-39* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1971), 317. Where *heniṣp yṯd* ‘*al-T_{add}* is given this label, the idea of “menacing” or “threatening” is often tied to the traditional (incorrect) understanding of the verb *heniṣp* as “wave, shake.” On this phrase and the interpretation of the verb in the various relevant passages, see section 2.2.5.

³³ Othmar Keel, *Wirkmächtige Siegeszeichen im Alten Testament: Ikonographische Studien zu Jos 8:18-26; Ex 17:8-13; 2 Kön 13:14-19 und 1 Kön 22:11* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1974), 154-58. Based on the parallelism in Isaiah 14:26, Keel believes that *nṣṭḥ yṯd* has the additional connotation of signaling “einen herrscherlichen Willen, einen Plan, der ausgeführt werden will” (ibid., 156). Keel also believes that *heniṣp yṯd* describes a different gesture, one of wild swinging; again, he is informed by the traditional (incorrect) understanding of the verb *heniṣp* (see section 2.2.5). Finally, note that the gesture of Joshua in the battle against Ai (Joshua 8) and that of Moses in the battle against Amalek (Exodus 17) are for Keel different gestures (for the former, see immediately below).

³⁴ Ackroyd, “*yṯd*,” in *TDOT*, 5:412, 424.

³⁵ Izak Cornelius, *The Iconography of the Canaanite Gods Reshef and Baʿal* (Fribourg: University Press, 1994), 255.

hand with a sickle sword, is a gesture of victory with magical efficacy (“wirkmächtige Siegeszeichen”).³⁶

4. Sign of divine intervention with magical power to smite in telesthetic fashion. Humbert ascribes to the gesture denoted by *נֹתֵחַ יָד* “la portée, non seulement surnaturelle, mais funeste.”³⁷ According to Miller, the gesture of Moses in Exodus 17 and of Joshua in Joshua 8 is “a sign of Yahweh’s intervention with symbolic or magical qualities.”³⁸ L’Orange relates biblical instances of the gesture to the apotropaic “Cosmocrator’s Sign” performed by Sol Invictus and by the Roman emperor in Roman art and by Christ in early Christian art, stating that “the outstretched right hand was...a primeval magical sign of power in the East.”³⁹ The fist in Near Eastern iconography, according to Van Buren, is magically efficacious against the evil eye.⁴⁰ For Cornelius, although the gesture in its most basic function is one of “menacing,” it is used in iconography as an apotropaic gesture conveying the deity’s “absolute power.”⁴¹

The first two interpretations are related in that they both appeal to natural behavior, without recourse to culturally specific symbolism or beliefs. The raising of the hand to strike with the fist or with a weapon is virtually universal human behavior. Even when the gesture is not consummated by actual striking (as in the second interpretation), the gesture is easily recognized as a prelude to striking and can elicit defensive reflex reactions in an addressee. The second interpretation understands the gesture as having been “ritualized,” specifically in the Huxleyan sense of “adaptive formalization and canalization...so as to secure more effective

³⁶ Keel, *Wirkmächtige Siegeszeichen*, 18-88. Keel does not connect this gesture with the smiting god motif, but rather with the motif of a deity holding out a sickle sword toward another figure.

³⁷ Paul Humbert, “Etendre la main,” *VT* 12 (1962): 391.

³⁸ Patrick D. Miller, Jr., *The Divine Warrior in Early Israel* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), 135.

³⁹ Hans Peter L’Orange, *Studies on the Iconography of Cosmic Kingship in the Ancient World* (New Rochelle, New York: Caratzas Brothers, 1982), 139-70. Note that L’Orange, relying on the Septuagint, includes many biblical examples that clearly pertain to other gestures in the Hebrew. Moreover, the iconographic gesture that he links with these texts is Palm Out, not Fist Up. These mistakes lead to some distortion in his description of the gesture, such as the idea that the gesture could be used for blessing as well as for cursing.

⁴⁰ Van Buren conflates the iconography of Syrian-style cylinder seals with Mesopotamian iconographic convention in general. Elizabeth Douglas Van Buren, *Symbols of the Gods in Mesopotamian Art* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1945), 57-59; this idea is followed by Dominique Collon, *The Seal Impressions from Tell Atchana/Alalakh* (Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker, 1975), 180-81, 186-88.

⁴¹ Cornelius, *Iconography of the Canaanite Gods*, 255-59. Italics in the original.

communicatory (‘signalling’) function” and “reduction of intra-group damage.”⁴² The gesture has been emancipated from the inevitable outcome of smiting to become a formalized threat signal.

These two functions, being part of natural human behavior, likely factored in various ways into ancient Northwest Semitic understandings of the gesture as depicted in iconography. If it were not for the evidence provided by textual sources, we might easily assume that these functions fully account for the meaning of the gesture in ancient Northwest Semitic culture. However, it is clear from the Hebrew Bible that the gesture was associated with supernatural effects. The gesture could be performed at a distance from the addressee, and in such cases the effects were not limited to eliciting a defensive reaction in the addressee. Some effects were similar to those of smiting in close quarters. However, the effects were understood to be on a larger scale than the mere smiting of a single individual, and they could include such things as plagues, upheaval of topographical features, and the alteration of natural elements.⁴³ Further, our contextual synthesis in chapters 3 and 4 shows that the gesture as represented in textual and iconographic sources was particularly associated with deities and their specially commissioned human representatives (including kings and prophets). Thus, while we may assume that the average warrior on the battlefield would raise his hand in this way to smite with a weapon, the gesture as featured in the textual sources was linked to divine agency and was associated with supernatural effects that could be carried out at a distance.

Interpretations of the outstretched hand with a weapon as a sign of victory differ in the derivation of this meaning. The NIV’s interpretation of the gesture in Micah 5:8 as a hand “lifted

⁴² Huxley, “Introduction,” 258.

⁴³ See the discussions about words in structural alignment with *nʿṭṭḥ yʿd (bʿl)* ‘*al-T* and its synonyms in sections 2.2.15 and 3.2.1. Also cf. the discussion of criteria for distinguishing telesthetic smiting from close-proximity striking in section 3.2.1.5.

up in triumph” may refer to a raising of the fist in jubilation after the successful outcome of a battle. For Keel, the sickle sword held in the outstretched hand is a symbol of divine victory over enemies, but the gesture of holding out the weapon is also used performatively to effect victory. In this performative sense, the interpretation could account for most of the textual data for *nʿṭpʰ yʿd (bʿl) ‘al-T* and its synonyms as well as for the iconographic examples of Fist Up.⁴⁴ However, this understanding of the gesture does not work as well in instances of the gesture being used to effect topographical upheaval or to alter natural elements, such as making the earth become lice in Exodus 8:12-13 and making the mountains tremble in Isaiah 5:25. In these cases, the gesture seems only indirectly tied to an outcome of victory. It is not the earth/lice and the mountains but rather the Egyptians and Israel who are portrayed as the “enemies,” and the defeat comes only eventually as a result of multiple destructive uses of the gesture. To the extent that the notion of divine victory is generalized to encompass divine might, the interpretation becomes more like number 4 (see below). Also, we lack clear instances in which the gesture is performed after a victory has been achieved. The interpretation thus seems strained and more complicated than is necessary to explain the data.

The fourth interpretation most readily fits the textual and iconographic data. In this view, the gesture is a ritual action that is conceptually linked to mythological divine action; it is conceived of as exerting supernatural power on an animate or inanimate addressee. It is with this gesture that the deity (Ba‘lu or Yahweh) smote the chaos monster in the primordial battle (other mythological contexts are also possible, since the iconography also shows goddesses performing the gesture). The deity also uses it from heaven to smite enemies, including his people when they

⁴⁴ Note that this would involve extending the interpretation beyond the examples that Keel includes. He confines his interpretation to Joshua 8 and to the specific iconographic motif of holding out a sickle sword. The iconographic gesture, according to Keel, was reinterpreted as the motif was transferred from Mesopotamia to Egypt, then finally to Phoenicia and Israel, eventually being understood as performed by the king toward enemies (rather than by the deity toward the king). See Keel, *Wirkmächtige Siegeszeichen*, 75-76, 81-82.

are rebellious (as in Isaiah 5:25; 9:10-11, 16, 19-20; 10:4). It has the same efficacy when a human performs it under commission from the deity (as with Moses in the Exodus plague narrative and Joshua in Joshua 8:18-19, 26).

By casting the raised-hand gesture unequivocally as a ritual action, this interpretation raises the issue of the gesture's actual *Sitz im Leben* within Northwest Semitic society. One idea developed by L'Orange, Ricks, and Sroka envisions an installation ceremony in which a royal or priestly initiate is taught the gesture; in the formulation of this idea by Ricks and Sroka, it seems that the gesture is put to use in the installation ceremony itself, in a ritual combat reenacting the primordial conflict against chaos.⁴⁵ The texts which L'Orange adduces to support the idea of a ritual installation setting for the transmission of the lifted-hand gesture include those mentioning "filling the hands" (*mille' yad*) in the initiation of priests (Exodus 28:41; 29:9, etc.),⁴⁶ Jonathan's "strengthening of David's hand in God" (1 Samuel 23:16), and king Joash's visit to Elijah (2 Kings 13:14-19). This evidence is tenuous at best. None of these passages is clearly connected with the lifted-hand gesture, and there is no indication of a regular ritual context aside from the "filling of hands" in the priestly initiation. The further development of this idea by Ricks and Sroka depends entirely on non-Northwest-Semitic comparative data. Thus a ritual context for the use of Fist Up within an installation ceremony does not appear especially likely at the present state of research.

Nicolas Wyatt also places the use of Fist Up (what he calls the *Chaoskampf* motif) in a ritual context connected with an enthronement ceremony, but unlike the reconstruction by L'Orange, Ricks, and Sroka, the scene takes place following the installation. According to Wyatt,

⁴⁵ L'Orange, *Studies on the Iconography*, 161-62; Stephen D. Ricks and John J. Sroka, "King, Coronation, and Temple: Enthronement Ceremonies in History," in *Temples of the Ancient World: Ritual and Symbolism*, ed. Donald W. Parry (Salt Lake City: Deseret, 1994), 253.

⁴⁶ For this idiom, see BDB, 570.

after the newly enthroned king receives divine weapons and a favorable oracle, he goes forth to battle. Upon his victorious return, there is a ritual smiting of the captured enemy king at the temple, and this is where the Fist Up gesture is used. This ritual smiting reenacts the primordial combat between the storm god and the sea. Wyatt argues for this reconstruction based on cuneiform documents from Mari, the Ugaritic text *KTU* 1.2 iv 7-31 (describing Ba'lu's combat against Yammu), Ugaritic and biblical poetry alluding to similar combats (cf. section 4.2.7.3 herein), 1 Samuel 15:33 (describing the slaying of the Amalekite king Agag "before Yahweh"), the Mesha stela from Moab, Ugaritic art (such as the "Baal au foudre" stela and the ivory bed panel that shows a figure with a sword poised to smite a cowering captive), and comparison with ancient Egyptian sources.⁴⁷ Wyatt's careful argumentation from these sources appears quite convincing, although the ritual interpretation of mythological texts inevitably has a degree of tenuousness. We would further suggest that the ritual may have been enacted not only in connection with an enthronement ceremony but at other times as well (as in 1 Samuel 15:33).

In addition to temple ceremony, there are some indications that the gesture could be used in battles as a magical action to smite enemies. In the narratives of Moses in the battle against the Amalekites (Exodus 17) and of Joshua in the battle against Ai (Joshua 8), the leader performs this gesture with magical efficacy until the enemy is defeated. These narratives are clearly oriented to extolling Yahweh's deeds in the salvation history of Israel, yet they may also reflect a real custom that might take place on the battlefield.⁴⁸ As discussed in section 4.2.7.4, smiting god figurines, if they were indeed carried on standards in battle, may have filled a similar function.

⁴⁷ Nicolas Wyatt, "Arms and the King," in *"Und Mose schrieb dieses Lied auf": Studien zum Alten Testament und zum Alten Orient, Festschrift für Oswald Loretz zur Vollendung seines 70. Lebensjahres mit Beiträgen von Freunden, Schülern und Kollegen*, ed. Manfred Dietrich and Ingo Kottsieper (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1998), 833-82.

⁴⁸ Cf. David Calabro, "'He Teaches My Hands to War': The Semiotics of Ritual Hand Gestures in Ancient Israelite Warfare," in *War and Peace in Jewish Tradition: From the Ancient World to the Present*, ed. Yigal Levin and Amnon Shapira (London: Routledge, 2012), 51-61.

The gesture, whether performed by a representation of the deity or by a human leader commissioned to perform it, would function equally well as a visible manifestation of divine intervention.

In understanding how Fist Up functions to shape the interaction structure between participants, it is useful to review what the textual and iconographic evidence indicate about the form of the gesture. The arm (usually the right) was raised to the side, approximately to the square, the hand making a fist. A weapon was often held in the fist, although we have shown that the gesture could also involve just the raised fist without a weapon. Within the attested repertoire of Northwest Semitic ritual gestures, the closest formal analogues to Fist Up are Palm Out, Palm In, and Palm Sideways. Fist Up differs from these other gestures in four respects: (1) the height to which the hand is raised, which is greater in Fist Up; (2) the distance of the hand from the addressee, which is also greater in Fist Up; (3) the shape of the hand, which is open in the other gestures but closed in Fist Up; and (4) the possibility of holding a weapon in the gesturing hand in the case of Fist Up.

These formal features of Fist Up correspond to contextual elements that are evident in the textual sources. The gesture's formal features can be understood as means of informing or structuring these contextual elements. The hand being held high means that the gesture can be readily seen from a wide distance, thus invoking a large-scale setting (which is, in fact, the usual kind of setting attested in the sources⁴⁹); to the degree that this distance is narrowed, the gesture would become more and more overwhelming for the target.⁵⁰ The hand being held away from the

⁴⁹ See sections 3.2.1 and 4.2.7.1.

⁵⁰ Cf. the label *k3b=f*, probably to be interpreted as “who draws near (for battle),” in an Oriental Institute stela showing Rashap performing Fist Up (OI 10569); for this, see section 4.2.7.2. It is possible that there is a general correlation between relative height and relative hostility in the ancient Northwest Semitic nonverbal repertoire. For example, the hostile oath in Deuteronomy 32:40-41 is made with hand raised “to the sky,” in contrast to other examples of the oath gesture that do not include this prepositional phrase, perhaps implying that the hand is held lower (also compare the submissive oath with the hand under the addressee's thigh in Genesis 24:2, 9; 47:29). Also

addressee, in contrast with the “reaching out” implied by Palm Out and other gestures, implies a severed relationship, thus hostility rather than intimacy. The closed fist also contrasts with the open palm of Palm Out, Palm In, Palm Sideways, Palms Out, and Palms In/Sideways; the former is consistently associated with violence, even independently of whether the fist holds a weapon.⁵¹ Fist Up differs from all other ritual gestures attested in Northwest Semitic texts in that it seems to have been performed in silence, with no accompanying speech act.⁵² Just as Fist Up is the only gesture in this group without open palm, it is also the only one without speech.⁵³ This fact, taken together with the catastrophic results associated with the gesture, suggests that the non-speech accompanying the gesture is an “ominous silence,” perhaps helping to project onto the target the status of a non-entity or transitory entity (one that does not function as an addressee of speech).⁵⁴ The gesture and accompanying silence may therefore be thought of as performing annihilation or transformation on the target. Fist Up also iconically summons up both a battlefield smiting scene and the primordial battle of the storm god against chaos. The weapons that are raised with the gesture are typically symbolic of authority and/or function as indices of previous contact with the

contrast lifting the hand and being “high-handed” in defiant or rebellious action on one hand (Exodus 14:8; Numbers 15:30; 33:3; Deuteronomy 32:27; 2 Samuel 18:28; 20:21; 1 Kings 11:26-27) with merely “putting forth” the hand in surrender or in pledging allegiance on the other (2 Kings 10:15; Jeremiah 50:14-15; Lamentations 5:6; 1 Chronicles 29:23-24). See the discussions of the relevant phrases in chapter 2. Also cf. Ackroyd, “*yod*,” 411-12.

⁵¹ In the two biblical instances of the Hebrew word *ʿegrop* “fist,” it is mentioned in connection with striking: Exodus 21:18; Isaiah 58:4.

⁵² This is, of course, not only an argument about silence but also an argument from silence. However, the argument gains some force from comparison with the other gestures. Whereas the textual references to other gestures quite consistently indicate accompanying speech, either with a direct quote or by way of summary, references to Fist Up never give such an indication, despite the fact that Fist Up occurs more frequently than any other hand gesture.

⁵³ Even the Confronted Figure Handclasp is depicted in the ‘Abdiba’l ivory as using an open palm.

⁵⁴ This could be considered a form of “conative silence” in the classification of “eloquent silence” developed by Michal Ephratt, which she aligns with Roman Jakobson’s six functions of language; see her article “The Functions of Silence,” *Journal of Pragmatics* 40 (2008): 1920-21. J. Cale Johnson, “Indexical Iconicity in Sumerian Belles Lettres,” *Language & Communication* 33 (2013): 46n93, writes of a “connection in later Mesopotamian literature between sound and presence/existence, on the one hand, and silence and non-existence, on the other hand,” citing Piotr Michalowski, “Presence at the Creation,” in *Lingering over Words: Studies in Ancient Near Eastern Literature in Honor of William L. Moran*, ed. Tzvi Abusch, John Huehnergard, and Piotr Steinkeller (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 381-96. Michalowski shows that in the beginning of the Babylonian creation account Enuma Elish, “Chaos is envisioned as an absence and presence is linked to naming.” Throughout Enuma Elish, noise is equated with “action, creation, creativity,” while silence is equated with inaction. What we are suggesting here for the silence accompanying Fist Up is the converse of the creative function of God’s spoken word as exemplified in Genesis 1.

deity. Therefore, the Fist Up gesture can be deployed in an interaction to invoke a large-scale combat scenario, especially the primordial divine combat against chaos, correspondingly allocating to the target the roles of foe, chaos, and ultimately non-entity (or liminal/non-stable entity).

In the cases of the smiting god figurines and the Arslan Tash plaque, the medium in which the Fist Up gesture was represented may have served as a means of performing the gesture against a visible or invisible enemy. If the figurines were indeed carried into battle on standards (see section 4.2.7.4 and the discussion of the gesture’s *Sitz im Leben* above), their gesture would have been a concrete manifestation of divine power targeted at enemy forces on the battlefield and/or at supernatural forces fighting on the enemy’s behalf. The Arslan Tash plaque, an apotropaic object on which spells against invisible hostile forces are written, also gained additional efficacy from the storm god’s gesture represented on the plaque. The performative function of the iconographic medium in both cases coincided with the performative function of the gesture, projecting annihilation on the target.

5.3. Palm Out

The contextual synthesis in chapters 3-4 unites four phrases with the iconographic gesture of lifting the hand in front with the palm facing forward, which gesture we refer to as Palm Out, in the specific context of taking an oath or entering into a covenant. These four phrases are the following:

nōśō` yōd (+adv)_{oath} “lift up the hand (+adv)_{oath}”
nōtan yōd ləP_{obl} “put forth the hand to P_{obl}”
heri`m yōd `el-T “raise the hand toward T”
heni`p yōd `al-T_{ref} “elevate the hand concerning T_{ref}”

A subset of this oath or covenant contextual type is the hostile oath, in which one takes an oath to curse or destroy another (Deuteronomy 32:40-41; Ezekiel 20:23; Psalm 106:26-27). In addition, as we argue in section 4.3.7, two iterations of the basic gesture phrase *nōtan yōd*, namely *nōtan yōd (+adv)_{pledge}* “put forth the hand (+adv)_{pledge}” and *nōtan yōd ləT* “put forth the hand to T,” are to be linked with Palm Out in the contexts of pledging allegiance and presenting an offering to a deity.

Analysis of this gesture in Northwest Semitic art is particularly complicated because of the variety of contexts in which it is attested. Prior interpretations have generally been superficial, accounting for only a limited number of examples and usually lacking any articulated argumentation. Interpretations of this gesture in iconographic studies are most commonly disclosed in the form of a phrase attached to a brief description of the gesture, such as “(the figure) raises his/her hand in a gesture of greeting or blessing.” Northwest Semitic textual references to gestures that may be connected with Palm Out have also tended to be interpreted in cursory fashion, although there are some notable exceptions.⁵⁵ Overall, the interpretations are quite diverse, as may be seen in the following list.

1. Adoration. Langdon refers to Palm In in Mesopotamian iconography as a *gestus adorationis*, and Gruber reinterprets Langdon to make a distinction between the entreaty gesture of Palm In and the adoration gesture of Palm Out.⁵⁶ Contenau considers the Palm Out gesture in Phoenician art to be “le

⁵⁵ Åke Viberg, *Symbols of Law: A Contextual Analysis of Legal Symbolic Acts in the Old Testament* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1992), 19-31; Johan Lust, “For I Lift Up My Hand to Heaven and Swear: Deut 32:40,” in *Studies in Deuteronomy in Honour of C. J. Labuschagne on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday*, ed. F. Garcia Martinez et al. (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 155-64; David Rolph Seely, “The Raised Hand of God as an Oath Gesture,” in *Fortunate the Eyes that See: Essays in Honor of David Noel Freedman in Celebration of His Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Astrid B. Beck et al. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 411-21; Eugene P. McGarry, “The Ambidextrous Angel (Daniel 12:7 and Deuteronomy 32:40): Inner-Biblical Exegesis and Textual Criticism in Counterpoint,” *JBL* 124/2 (2005): 211-28.

⁵⁶ Stephen Langdon, “Gesture in Sumerian and Babylonian Prayer: A Study in Babylonian and Assyrian Archaeology,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1919): 535, 544; Mayer Gruber, “Akkadian *labān appi* in the Light of Art and Literature,” *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society of Columbia University (JANES)* 7 (1975): 78, 80-81.

geste conventionnel de l'adorant devant la divinité," a "signe d'adoration."⁵⁷ According to Cumont, "En Orient, la main droite levée, la paume en avant, est un geste rituel d'adoration ou de révérence que fait le fidèle en présence des dieux."⁵⁸ Porada contrasts the one-handed "gesture of worship" (Palm Out, Palm In, or Palm Sideways) with the clasped-hands "gesture of prayer" and with the two-handed "gesture of supplication" (Palms In or Palms Sideways) in seal impressions from Nuzi.⁵⁹

2. Greeting or blessing. This interpretation, as applied to Palm Out in Levantine iconography, seems to originate with studies like those of Langdon and Landsberger, who ascribe to Palm In and similar gestures in Mesopotamian art a function encompassing blessing, greeting, and prayer.⁶⁰ Contenau describes Palm Out, when performed by a deity, as a "signe de bon accueil" or as a form of "bénédition."⁶¹ Dunand, citing Langdon and Landsberger, states that the gesture of the Lady of Byblos on the Yahawwimilk stela is that of "bénir avec la main droite"; in the case of the king on the stela, it is a "geste de salutation déférente à l'égard de la déesse."⁶² Likewise, Barnett refers to Palm Out in Levantine ivories and seals as "a gesture of blessing or greeting."⁶³ Collon interprets Palm Out in seal impressions from Alalakh as a respectful form of greeting.⁶⁴ Seeden, observing that the Palm Out gesture of seated deity figurines precludes holding a weapon, says that these figurines "hold their hands extended to the public in an attitude of blessing or salutation."⁶⁵
3. Commandment. Przeworski uses the term "geste de commandement" to describe the Palm Out gesture performed by bronze figurines of seated deities.⁶⁶

⁵⁷ G. Contenau, *Manuel d'archéologie orientale* (Paris: Éditions Auguste Picard, 1931), 3:1475-78; G. Contenau, *La civilisation phénicienne* (Paris: Payot, 1949), 152, 155-56.

⁵⁸ M. Franz Cumont, "Deux monuments des cultes solaires," *Syria* 14/4 (1933): 387.

⁵⁹ Edith Porada, *Seal Impressions of Nuzi* (New Haven: American Schools of Oriental Research, 1947), 111-12.

⁶⁰ According to Langdon, "Gesture in Sumerian and Babylonian Prayer," 535, 544, the Palm In gesture, in opposition to the hands folded in front of the torso, lays "the emphasis on adoration and salutation"; further, Palm In "fundamentally conveys the idea of salutation, greeting, penance." Evidently, for Langdon, the concepts of adoration, salutation, greeting, and humble prayer all run together. Benno Landsberger, "Das 'Gute Wort,'" *Mitteilungen der Altorientalischen Gesellschaft* 4 (1930): 294-98, links Palm In with the Akkadian verb *karābu*, which has three senses or "sides of one meaning": the usual translation "bless" (segnen), the more fundamental meaning "greet" (grüssen), and the more restricted sense of "pray" (beten). See also the more recent study by Christopher Frechette, *Mesopotamian Ritual-Prayers of "Hand-Lifting" (Akkadian Šuillas): An Investigation of Function in Light of the Idiomatic Meaning of the Rubric* (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2012), 11-106.

⁶¹ Contenau, *Manuel*, 3:1475-78; Contenau, *Civilisation*, 135, 156.

⁶² Maurice Dunand, "Encore la stèle de Yahavmilk, roi de Byblos," *Bulletin du Musée de Beyrouth* 5 (1941): 72.

⁶³ R. D. Barnett, *A Catalogue of the Nimrud Ivories with Other Examples of Ancient Near Eastern Ivories in the British Museum* (London: British Museum, 1957), 140; R. D. Barnett, "The God on Wheels; or, the Seal of Shema," in *Studia mediterranea Piero Meriggi dicata*, ed. O. Carruba (Pavia: Aurora Edizioni, 1979), 54.

⁶⁴ Collon, *SITA*, 189-90.

⁶⁵ Helga Seeden, "Peace Figurines from the Levant," in *Archéologie au Levant: Recueil à la mémoire de Roger Saidah*, ed. Marguerite Yon (Lyon: Maison de l'Orient, 1982), 108, 114, 117, 119.

⁶⁶ Stefan Przeworski, "Notes d'archéologie syrienne et hittite: I: Les figurines assises et le char divin," *Syria* 9 (1928): 275. Przeworski does not elaborate on this interpretation. It is possible that he sees a link with the right-handed gesture of Sol Invictus in later antiquity, which, according to Dölger, is a gesture of commandment to the doors of the hours to open. Dölger also says that the gesture was appropriated into Christian iconography, in which it is performed by Christ as he commands the sun to rise at dawn. See Franz Joseph Dölger, *Sol Salutis: Gebet und*

4. Symbol of a deity. Van Buren suggests that “the raised open hand” in Near Eastern iconography “symbolized the divinity,” namely the sun god (Shamash, Shapshu), who was also the god of justice.⁶⁷ The gesture in oath-taking would thus signify the deity’s presence in the role of an all-powerful judge.
5. Apotropaic sign. Cumont and L’Orange believe that the Palm Out gesture performed by royal and divine figures in late antique iconography originated from an ancient Near Eastern gesture whose function was to exert supernatural apotropaic power. While the gesture could accompany adoration (see interpretation no. 1), deities also used it in all kinds of ritual acts, including blessing, decrees of salvation or protection, and execration.⁶⁸ Keel argues, based primarily on Egyptian evidence, that Palm Out was a variant of the two-handed gesture Palms Out, the one-handed version being used when one hand was occupied, as with a numinous or symbolic object. Like the two-handed gesture, Palm Out was originally a form of conjuring to avert the danger of a powerful divine being whom one has encountered.⁶⁹
6. Means of transfer of magical power. According to Vorwahl, the hand is raised to effect a transfer of power (*mana*). In the case of oath-taking, the power is transferred from God to the person making the gesture.⁷⁰ In some other contexts, the power is transferred to others, with potentially harmful effect.⁷¹
7. “Lifting the hand” to take action. Johan Lust argues extensively, based mostly on textual evidence of the phrase *נָסַח יָד*, but also with some references to other phrases and to iconography, that the significance of this gesture is “entrer en action en faveur ou au détriment de quelq’un.” The gesture described by *נָסַח יָד*, according to Lust, is therefore not an oath-taking gesture but rather one of present action.⁷²
8. Token of sincerity. Wolff suggests that the hand stands metonymically for one’s power, so that “giving the hand” (*נָטַח יָד*) in 2 Kings 10:15, for example, can be understood as “the token of sincerity and mutual readiness to help the other.”⁷³

Gesang im christlichen Altertum, second edition (Münster: Verlag der Aschendorffschen Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1925), 374-76. Cumont suggests that this was a late antique reinterpretation of the Near Eastern divine gesture of protection (see below): Cumont, “Deux monuments,” 387n4.

⁶⁷ Van Buren, *Symbols of the Gods*, 59-60.

⁶⁸ L’Orange, *Studies on the Iconography*, 139, 153-62 (with long quote from Cumont on p. 157); cf. Cumont, “Deux monuments,” 387.

⁶⁹ Keel, *Wirkmächtige Siegeszeichen*, 95-100.

⁷⁰ Heinrich Vorwahl, *Die Gebärdensprache im Alten Testament* (Berlin: Emil Ebering, 1932), 27-28.

⁷¹ Vorwahl, *Gebärdensprache*, 17, 30-32, 47, 50, 63.

⁷² Johan Lust, “Ez., XX, 4–26 une parodie de l’histoire religieuse d’Israël,” *Ephemerides theologicae lovanienses* 43 (1967): 516–26; Johan Lust, *Traditie, Redactie en Kerygma bij Ezechiël: Een Analyse van Ez., XX, 1-26* (Brussels: Paleis der Academiën, 1969), 147-73; Johan Lust, “For I Lift Up My Hand to Heaven and Swear: Deut 32:40,” in *Studies in Deuteronomy in Honour of C. J. Labuschagne on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday*, ed. F. Garcia Martinez et al. (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 155-64; Johan Lust, “The Raised Hand of the Lord in Deut 32:40 according to MT, 4QDeut-q, and LXX,” in *Textus: Studies of the Hebrew University Bible Project, Volume XVIII*, ed. Alexander Rofé (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1995), 33-45.

⁷³ Hans Walter Wolff, *Anthropology of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), 67.

9. Emancipated contact. Falk argues that the hand is raised as if to grasp the hand of God.⁷⁴ This idea could also be applied to contact with the addressee of the oath, the gesture being either a prelude to a joining of hands (ideally) or a substitute for it.
10. Invocation of deity. Seely suggests that the hand points to heaven in order to invoke deity, either as a guarantor or as a witness.⁷⁵ Schroer and Staubli also believe that the hand is raised to “evoke the witness of heaven when an oath was sworn.”⁷⁶
11. Presentation of authenticator. Another suggestion by Seely, based on Yahweh swearing “by his right hand” in Isaiah 62:8, is that one actually swears by one’s arm or by what it symbolizes, such as one’s power or one’s whole self.⁷⁷ Further, in light of self-imprecations involving the hand in Psalm 137:5 and Job 13:14; 31:22, the hand or what it symbolizes could be symbolically placed at stake by means of the gesture.⁷⁸
12. Sign of non-treachery and/or of purity. Yet another possibility, according to Seely, is that the upraised, empty right hand symbolizes lack of treachery and the cleanliness of the hand.⁷⁹

Most of these interpretations have some merit when applied to a limited set of contextual types. Half of the interpretations could apply to the gesture in all of its contexts. Some others are myopic, not being able to explain the Palm Out gesture in all of the contexts in which it occurs, despite working well in some instances. Finally, a few are unsatisfactory when held up against the data as assembled in chapters 2-4. Generally speaking, these interpretations describe one or more contextual types or explain one type of data without penetrating the meaning of the gesture itself. We address each interpretation in turn.

⁷⁴ Falk, “Gestures Expressing Affirmation,” 268-69.

⁷⁵ Seely, “Raised Hand of God,” 416-17.

⁷⁶ Silvia Schroer and Thomas Staubli, *Body Symbolism in the Bible* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2001), 155; see also Conklin, *Oath Formulas*, 15.

⁷⁷ Seely, “Raised Hand of God,” 417, no. 2.

⁷⁸ Seely, “Raised Hand of God,” 418, no. 5.

⁷⁹ Seely, “Raised Hand of God,” 417, no. 3. Seely explicitly connects this with the prayer gesture of spreading the palms (see below). There are some obvious similarities between this interpretation and formulations of “greeting or blessing” (such as that of Seeden) that focus on the emptiness of the hand. The difference is the purpose of the display: in the “greeting or blessing” interpretation, the purpose is to demonstrate peaceful intent, a prerequisite for the encounter in general; for Seely, the purpose is to communicate lack of guile, a condition specifically for the felicity of the oath.

All the interpreters who align themselves with the “adoration” interpretation reserve it only for mortals addressing deities, since deities addressing mortals would never be expected to pay adoration, nor would such a meaning be appropriate in cases in which the participants are of equal status. The interpretation thus appears arbitrarily selective, especially in cases like the Yahawwimilk stela, in which a mortal and a deity face each other and both symmetrically perform Palm Out. Further, if our contextual synthesis of Palm Out with the Northwest Semitic oath-taking gesture holds, an interpretation of the gesture as signifying adoration would appear off-base in the majority of cases.

The notion of “greeting or blessing” can also be understood in ways that appear overly selective. Some interpreters, for example, use the French word *accueil* “welcome,” which would tend to be a role of deity or of royalty. Indeed, interpreters’ use of the term is virtually always restricted to cases in which a deity is the agent, while the identical gesture by a mortal facing a deity is given the label “adoration.”⁸⁰ Greeting can also take the form of a submissive approach, which would only apply to a mortal addressing one of higher status.⁸¹

Aside from these restrictive notions of greeting, however, the interpretation as a “gesture of greeting or blessing” is provocative in its potential to explain the textual and iconographic data. Some interpreters analyze this as a gesture accompanying “salutation,” greeting with a blessing (without specificity as to whether the agent is receiving or approaching), which is appropriate for a mortal or a deity.⁸² In the Northwest Semitic sphere, “blessing” (encompassing

⁸⁰ Contenau, *Manuel*, 3:1475-78; Contenau, *Civilisation*, 135, 156; Dunand, “Stèle de Yahawwimilk,” 72.

⁸¹ For the idea that prayer gestures may originate from greeting gestures which may, in turn, originate from gestures of submission, see Géza Révész, *The Human Hand: A Psychological Study* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1958), 120; cf. Jamsheed K. Choksy, “In Reverence for Deities and Submission to Kings: A Few Gestures in Ancient Near Eastern Societies,” *Iranica Antiqua* 37 (2002): 7-29.

⁸² Dunand, “Stèle de Yahawwimilk,” 72 (mortal facing deity, both in Palm Out); Barnett, *Catalogue*, 140 (mortal in Palm Out); Barnett, “God on Wheels,” 54 (deity in Palm Out).

words from the root *brk*) can be rendered by mortals to deities, vice versa, or between mortals.⁸³

We have seen that the inscription on the Yahawwimilk stela contains a wish that the Lady of Byblos bless (*tbrk*) the king, while the Lady of Byblos is shown performing the Palm Out gesture toward the king on the lunette.⁸⁴ Further, this function of the gesture would compare well with the Hindu and Buddhist *abhayamudrā*, a ritual hand gesture that stands for the “absence of fear,” which gesture also happens to resemble Palm Out.⁸⁵

Despite its potential to explain a good portion of the iconographic data, we consider the “greeting or blessing” interpretation of Palm Out to be generally inadequate. Some of the reasons for this are given in chapter 4. First, we note that this interpretation seems largely based on mistaken comparisons with Mesopotamian and Egyptian iconography.⁸⁶ Second, the interpretation excludes links with gestures mentioned in Northwest Semitic literature, since the latter do not include a one-handed greeting or blessing gesture (there is only a two-handed blessing gesture, mentioned in Leviticus 9:22). To be sure, neither of these observations is a strong argument against the interpretation. Scholars might have mistaken understandings of

⁸³ BDB, 138-39.

⁸⁴ See section 4.3.7.2.

⁸⁵ See Ernest Dale Saunders, *Mudrā: A Study of Symbolic Gestures in Japanese Buddhist Sculpture* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1960), 55-56. Saunders, relying on L’Orange, *Studies on the Iconography*, suggests a Near Eastern or Mediterranean origin for the *abhayamudrā* (known in Japanese tradition as *semui-in*). Nicolas Wyatt, “The Stela of the Seated God from Ugarit,” *UF* 15 (1983): 276, also compares the Palm Out gesture of ‘Ilu on Aleppo 4622 with the *abhayamudrā*. Regardless of whether a historical connection between the Levantine Palm Out gesture and the *abhayamudrā* exists, the comparison is informative from a typological standpoint.

⁸⁶ Dunand, “Stèle de Yahavmilk,” 72, refers to Langdon, “Gesture in Sumerian and Babylonian Prayer,” and Landsberger, “Gute Wort,” to explain the Palm Out gesture; he fails to note, however, that Langdon and Landsberger are discussing Palm In, not Palm Out. Similarly, Gruber, “Akkadian *labān appi*,” 78, cites Langdon for a distinction between a gesture with the palm toward the face, which is “the kiss throwing hand,” and one with the palm away from the face, which symbolizes “adoration and salutation.” Both Dunand and Gruber are perhaps misled by Langdon’s italicization of the phrase “*palm inward*” (pp. 533, 535), which might suggest a contrast with the opposite hand position. However, Langdon nowhere discusses a one-handed gesture with palm outward, although he does mention the Egyptian gesture with “*palms outward*,” which he analyzes as a gesture of imploring (p. 548). Barnett, *Catalogue*, 140, describes Palm Out as having the functions of “prayer, blessing, oath or greeting,” citing Luise Klebs, *Die Reliefs und Malereien des mittleren Reiches: Material zur ägyptischen Kulturgeschichte* (Heidelberg: Carl Winters Universitätsbuchhandlung, 1922), 177-79. However, the gesture that Klebs describes on these pages that most closely matches Barnett’s analysis is the two-handed gesture Palms Out; in fact, Klebs does not mention the Palm Out gesture on these pages.

comparative data but still be right in their conclusions about the Northwest Semitic gesture itself, and Levantine art may reflect aspects of Northwest Semitic culture that are not represented in texts. However, as we are now able to view the gesture based on the combined evidence of texts and iconography, some stronger arguments against the “greeting or blessing” interpretation are apparent. First, this interpretation does not account for the gesture as used in oaths, a context that is evident both in literature (for example, Genesis 14:22) and in iconography (for example, the “Covenant Stela” from Ugarit). Second, the use of the gesture in hostile contexts (such as in oaths with hostile content and in surrender before an attacker) virtually contradicts the “greeting or blessing” interpretation. Third, whereas a “greeting or blessing” interpretation works well to explain the formal variation and consistent divine-human reciprocity of certain hand-lifting gestures in Mesopotamian iconography, this is not the case with Palm Out in Levantine iconography.⁸⁷ Rather, when this interpretation is applied to Northwest Semitic sources, it appears too generic, failing to explain why the gesture is used in some instances but not in others. Finally, the relationship between the iconography and the inscription on the Yahawwimilk stela is best explained as a match between, on the one hand, the reciprocal gestures of the Lady of Byblos and king Yahawwimilk and, on the other hand, a series of reciprocal performative actions mentioned in the inscription.⁸⁸ This points to a basic function of the gesture as accompanying a performative act, rather than a simple equation of the gesture with the concept of blessing. Of course, the performative function could encompass that of blessing, but the fundamental function is not limited to blessing, and it is not necessarily associated with greeting.

⁸⁷ According to Christopher Frechette, the Mesopotamian gestures vary according to the status of the participants, and their use can be consistently correlated with auspicious ritual encounters between deities and mortals. See Frechette, *Mesopotamian Ritual-Prayers*, 11-106. Palm Out, however, does not vary according to status, and the divine-human encounter is an occasional but not an overarching context for the use of the gesture.

⁸⁸ See the discussion in section 4.3.7.2.

The commandment interpretation (no. 3) works very well in some restricted cases. It could fit the contextual type that we have designated in chapter 4 as “divine oath or decree” (decree being similar to commandment). It could also fit the raising of the hand to issue a command to gather, which occurs in Isaiah 13:2 and 49:22 (see section 3.2.3.2).⁸⁹ However, this interpretation does not work for examples of a mortal addressing a deity.

The uplifted hand could very well function as a symbol of the deity, as suggested in interpretation no. 4. This interpretation is especially fitting for examples of a mortal taking an oath, and it can also apply to examples of the gesture accompanying other performative acts. A problem for this interpretation is how to understand the gesture when the deity himself/herself performs it, especially when he/she is not the sun god.

Interpretations 5 and 6 in the list above ascribe to the gesture a function of channeling power. They differ primarily in the way the power is thought to be rendered efficacious. They also involve, to a greater or lesser extent, confusion with Fist Up and the phrases we have aligned with it, although this does not impact their overall applicability to Palm Out. These interpretations work well to explain the gesture in all of its contexts: in the context of an oath or decree, the gesture exerts power to accomplish what is sworn or decreed; in the context of pledging allegiance, the gesture blesses or protects the recipient of allegiance; in the context of presenting an offering, the gesture may be understood as protecting the offering itself⁹⁰ or

⁸⁹ The gesture here may be Palm Out or an entirely different gesture. Unfortunately, the kind of scene described in these passages does not appear in Levantine iconography, unless the gesture is to be linked with Fist Up.

⁹⁰ For Keel, the protective function of the gesture applies when the target’s back is turned to the agent (in Egyptian language and culture, being “behind” somebody is equated with “protecting” him/her). See Keel, *Wirkmächtige Siegeszeichen*, 95-100. Egyptian depictions of the ritual “presentation of Maat” show a small figure of the seated goddess nestled in one of the presenter’s hands, while the other hand performs Palm Out behind the figure. In one example from the Ptolemaic period, an accompanying inscription reads, *dī=(i) n=k m3̄t hr d̄rt=i i3̄b.(t), r̄mn=i n imn.(t) hr h̄w.t=s* “I give you Maat on my left hand, my right arm protecting her.” See Richard A. Parker and Leonard H. Lesko, “The Khonsu Cosmogony,” in *Pyramid Studies and Other Essays Presented to I. E. S. Edwards*, ed. John Baines, T. G. H. James, Anthony Leahy, and A. F. Shore (London: The Egypt Exploration Society, 1988),

blessing the recipient of the offering; and in the context of surrender, the gesture functions apotropaically to avert punishment at the hands of the conqueror. This suitability is certainly due in part to the breadth of the concept of power, especially when it is broadly defined as including blessing and curse. Keel's formulation also gains a great deal of mileage from the multiple meanings of the German word *Beschwörung* "confirmation by oath, exorcism, conjuring," which he uses to describe the gesture. In addition, as explained below, interpretation 6 owes some of its felicity to the dual directionality of Palm Out, as the gesture seems to point upward (as toward a heavenly source of power) while at the same time presenting the flat of the hand to a target roughly on the same level with the agent. The chief weakness of these two interpretations is that they lack direct support from textual sources, at least as applied to Palm Out, although passages referring to Fist Up and other gestures (such as hand placement, in which one lays hands on the head of a target) do show that the idea of channeling "power" (in a few senses of the term) was at home in Northwest Semitic culture as an explanation for how ritual gestures worked.⁹¹

Lust's interpretation of the gesture described by *nōśō' yōd* as taking action also involves confusion with the phrases that we have linked with Fist Up, but the interpretation is fundamentally different from nos. 5 and 6. We argue against Lust's interpretation extensively in chapter 2 (see section 2.2.17). Basically, Lust's approach is flawed in its insistence on a one-to-one correspondence between gesture and phrase, excluding variation in adverbial constituents and other contextual differences. The evidence from careful examination of context agrees with the majority of modern interpreters, against Lust, that "I lifted up my hand to give" (Exodus 6:8 *passim*) indicates an oath and not the simple carrying-out of a physical action.

168-75; Emily Teeter, *The Presentation of Maat: Ritual and Legitimacy in Ancient Egypt* (SAOC 57; Chicago: Oriental Institute, 1997), 22.

⁹¹ Cf. Humbert, "Etendre la main," 389-92; Stephen Finlan, *The Background and Contents of Paul's Cultic Atonement Metaphors* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 86-93. For hand placement, see, in particular, Numbers 27:18-20; Deuteronomy 34:9.

An interpretation of Palm Out as a token of sincerity would fit well in the contexts of oath-taking, pledging allegiance, and surrender. This interpretation is based on the multiple denotata of the components of the gesture phrase *nʿtan yad* “put forth the hand”: *yad* “hand” can stand metonymically for “power,” and the verb *nʿtan* can refer to an action of “putting forth” or “giving.”⁹² The gesture is thus “read” as if it were a completely referential system hinging on wordplay with the phrase used to describe the gesture. This harmonizes with ancient Northwest Semitic culture, as there are several biblical passages in which portents are read into gestures based on wordplay with the denotative phrases.⁹³ Wolff’s approach can also be applied beyond the phrase *nʿtan yad*. For example, he analyzes “raising the hand” (*heriʾm yad*) as a defiant display of power, a signal of a “revolutionary uprising” (he refers to 1 Kings 11:26-27). He does not discuss *nʿśwʾ yad*, the phrase most frequently used in the context of oath-taking. However, we could perhaps creatively analyze the phrase, in the spirit of Wolff’s approach, as “bear up one’s power” in the sense of assuming responsibility to fulfill an obligation. This approach can account for the multiple functions of gestures, inasmuch as different verbal phrases can be used to describe the same gesture. A disadvantage of this kind of interpretation, however, is its exclusive focus on the verbal gesture phrase. One quickly loses sight of the inherent functionality of the gesture itself, as well as the determinative role of context in the empirical process. In this approach, context recedes from systematic scrutiny and plays a backstage role in the interpreter’s subjectivity. For example, the use of *heriʾm yad* to describe Abram’s gesture in Genesis 14:22-23 would suggest a defiant display, and this may work in the context, since Abram is refusing to

⁹² BDB, 390 (definition 2), 678-80 (definitions 1a-b, d, k, y).

⁹³ Scott Noegel, “‘Sign, Sign, Everywhere a Sign’: Script, Power, and Interpretation in the Ancient Near East,” in *Divination and Interpretation of Signs in the Ancient World*, ed. Amar Annus (Chicago: Oriental Institute, 2010), 153; David Calabro, “‘He Teaches My Hands to War’: The Semiotics of Ritual Hand Gestures in Ancient Israelite Warfare,” in *War and Peace in Jewish Tradition: From the Ancient World to the Present*, ed. Yigal Levin and Amnon Shapira (London: Routledge, 2012), 52-53.

become beholden to the king of Sodom. However, the function specifically as an oath gesture, distinct from *heriʾm yad* in the context of outright political rebellion (1 Kings 11:26-27) and yet similar to *nšwʾ yad*, *nʾtan yad*, and other phrases elsewhere, is hidden in this interpretation.

Interpretations 9-12 all share the basic analysis of the uplifted hand as an oath gesture.⁹⁴ They differ in the concept of what the gesture signifies in terms of iconic symbolism. For the most part, these interpretations could fit with the whole range of contexts for Palm Out. Nos. 9 and 10, like no. 6, recognize a split interaction structure involving an upward-located divine target and a forward-located addressee (see further below). Although these interpretations might seem paradoxical in the case of the divine oath or decree (in which a deity is the agent), there is abundant evidence that deities abide by the same customs as humans when it comes to oath-taking.⁹⁵ In no. 9, the gesture could call attention to the agent's affinity with a target (through the figurative grasping of the hand) or to his/her distance from the target (through the contrast between Palm Out and a literal clasping of the hands); this being the case, the interpretation could fit diverse types of interactions, both friendly and austere. No. 11, interpreting the gesture as a presentation of the hand for self-imprecation, is supported by textual sources and works admirably well in the various contexts. The one interpretation in this group that, in our opinion, does not work well in some contexts is no. 12, since it would be a stretch to say that purity or lack of treachery is at issue in the case of the hostile oath.

⁹⁴ For the plausibility of this basic analysis, see the discussion in sections 2.2.17 and 4.3.7. See also G. R. H. Wright, "Shechem and League Shrines," *VT* 21 (1971): 577-80, in which he describes Palm Out as "a hand raised in attestation." R. D. Barnett, in *A Catalogue of the Nimrud Ivories with Other Examples of Ancient Near Eastern Ivories in the British Museum* (London: British Museum, 1957), 140, asserts that Palm Out "can mean prayer, blessing, oath or greeting," citing Luise Klebs, *Die Reliefs und Malereien des Mittleren Reiches* (Heidelberg: Carl Winters, 1922), 177, which includes part of a survey of gestures in Middle Kingdom Egyptian reliefs; however, as already mentioned, Klebs says nothing about an oath-taking function. Barnett is perhaps doubly misunderstanding "Der Gestus der Beschwörung" in Klebs, *Reliefs*, 179 as Palm Out (instead of stretching out the hand with a pointing finger) and as "swearing" (instead of "apotropaic conjuring").

⁹⁵ Conklin, *Oath Formulas*, 14-15.

To summarize, interpretations 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, and 11 could work in all the contexts in which Palm Out and the phrases associated with it are attested. Any or all of these interpretations might reflect ancient Northwest Semitic understandings of the Palm Out gesture. The coexistence of all these interpretations as viable options reflects the overdetermined nature of origin-focused gesture analysis. Interpretations 3, 4, and 12 work well in some contexts but are problematic in others. Nos. 1, 2, and 7 appear generally problematic and should be rejected.

A common denominator of all the contexts in which Palm Out occurs (divine oath or decree, human in oath, pledge of allegiance, human presenting offering, and surrender) is that they are all performative acts. This suggests that one of the functions of the Palm Out gesture is as a performative marker. The use of the gesture is equivalent to saying “I hereby...” in a performative utterance. For example, in Genesis 15:18, Yahweh makes a covenant with Abram. Yahweh’s performative utterance runs as follows: *ləzar* ^a*kə nətattī* ^y *’et-hə* [’]*ərəṣ hazzo* ^{’t} *minnəhar miṣrayim* ^{’ad-hannəḥər haggədol nəhar-pərət} “I hereby give this land to your posterity, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates.” Exodus 6:8 indicates that Yahweh’s covenant to give Abra(ha)m and his posterity the land was accompanied by an uplifted hand gesture (Palm Out): *hə* [’]*ərəṣ* ^{’a}*šer nəśō* ^{’tī} ^y *’et-yədi* ^y *lətet* [’]*otəh* *lə* [’]*abrəḥəm* *ləyiṣḥəq* *u* ^w*ləya* ^a*qob* “the land which I lifted up my hand to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.”⁹⁶ The verb *nətattī* in Genesis 15:18, corresponding to the infinitive *lətet* “to give” in Exodus 6:8, is a performative perfect: “I hereby give.”⁹⁷ The use of the gesture in tandem with the speech would serve to mark

⁹⁶ On the relationship between Genesis 15:18 and Exodus 6:8, cf. section 3.2.2 herein.

⁹⁷ For the “performative perfect” and other performative constructions in Northwest Semitic, see Dennis Pardee, “The Epistolary Perfect in Hebrew Letters,” *Biblische Notizen* 22 (1983): 34-40; Dennis Pardee and Robert M. Whiting, “Aspects of Epistolary Verbal Usage in Ugaritic and Akkadian,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* 50/1 (1987): 1-31; Delbert R. Hillers, “Some Performative Utterances in the Bible,” in *Pomegranates and Golden Bells: Studies in Biblical, Jewish, and Near Eastern Ritual, Law, and Literature in Honor of Jacob Milgrom*, ed. David P. Wright, David Noel Freedman, and Avi Hurvitz (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1995), 757-66; Seth L. Sanders, “Performative Utterances and Divine Language in Ugaritic,” *JNES* 63 (2004): 161-81; F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp, “(More) on Performatives in Semitic,” *Zeitschrift für Althebraistik* 17-20

the verb as a performative, explicitly distinguishing it as such rather than, for example, a reference to a past event (“I gave”). This recalls some of the functions ascribed to the gesture in the interpretations listed above, such as blessing and commandment, which are performative acts. However, the interpretation as a general performative marker may not have occurred to previous interpreters because the full range of textual and iconographic data was not available to them.

As a performative marker that can be deployed parallel to the spoken word, Palm Out demarcates the here-and-now as a legally binding moment of speech. The functionality of Palm Out also extends beyond marking performative discourse in time. The gesture can exploit the visual channel to shape the space of interaction. Specifically, the palm can face toward one participant (as if pressing speech toward an addressee located roughly on the same level as the agent) while the fingers point toward another (as to an upward-located referent). The gesture thus forms a bifurcated interaction structure along which to channel speech.⁹⁸ This functionality in shaping the interaction is reflected both in phrases describing the gesture and in the iconography of Palm Out. The phrase *heri'm yod* “raise the hand” (in oath) in Genesis 14:22-23 is followed by a Target constituent *'el-YHWH 'el 'elyo'n* “to Yahweh El Elyon.” In the majority interpretation of this passage, which we follow, the oath is addressed to the king of Sodom, while the hand is raised upward toward Yahweh El Elyon (the other possibility is that Abram here recounts a previous oath made with Yahweh El Elyon as the Addressee). The adverbial phrase therefore, in the majority interpretation, functions as a Directional Target and refers to an upward-located participant who is distinct from the addressee of the oath.⁹⁹ Another phrase, *nośo' yod (+adv)_{oath}*

(2004-2007): 36-81. As is typical in the world’s languages, the verb form that is most frequently used for the explicit primary performative in Biblical Hebrew is the minimally inflected finite form, the perfect. This may be parallel to the use of Palm Out as a general performative marker. This gesture may be understood as “minimally inflected,” since it involves only one hand, seems not to require repeated motion, and has no special finger articulation.

⁹⁸ This potential spatial function may not always have been utilized. Presumably, accompanying speech and shared cultural knowledge would help to determine in a given case whether an upward-located referent was involved.

⁹⁹ See further the discussion in section 2.2.7.

“lift up the hand (+adv)_{oath},” may include a Target/Addressee constituent marked by the preposition *lā* “to” or a Directional Target constituent marked by *ʿel-* “to”; there is no extant example in which both occur together, but they are not mutually exclusive from a conceptual standpoint.¹⁰⁰ As for the iconography of Palm Out, there is frequently shown a divine symbol above and in line with the fingers, in addition to the addressee whom the palm of the hand faces. In cases in which the layout of the scene and space limitations do not permit the symbol to occur in line with the gesture, and only in these cases, the symbol is shown above or in front of the gesturing hand. Examples are shown in the following list. In this list, the asterisk (*) signifies that there is no explicit addressee in front of the agent (for further discussion of all these pieces, see section 4.3).

winged sun disk	<u>stelae</u> : Aleppo 4622 (seated ʿIlu stela), Louvre AO 22368 (Yahawwimilk stela); <u>cylinder seals</u> : Ashmolean 1913.336, Ashmolean 1921.1188, Ashmolean 1952.129, Damascus 2598, NBC 11089, PLU (71); <u>stamp seals</u> : PBN de Clercq 2504, *Rosen NN. Total: 10.
star	<u>cylinder seals</u> : Aleppo M. 996, Aleppo M. 4528, Antakya 10302, Ashmolean 1920.52, NBC 7680; <u>stamp seals</u> : *Florence NN, *IAA 60-65, *IAA 69.20.661, *Moussaieff NN, *PBN Seyrig 1972.1317.124. Total: 10.
sun disk in crescent	<u>cylinder seals</u> : Antakya 9103, Ashmolean 1952.129, NBC 7680, YBC 9695; <u>stamp seals</u> : *BM 130667 (underside), *IAA 60-65, *Moussaieff NN, PLU (83). Total: 8.
bird	<u>cylinder seals</u> : Damascus 2668, Damascus 2898, Newell 319; <u>stamp seals</u> : PLU (81). Total: 4.
sun disk	<u>cylinder seals</u> : Damascus 2841, NBC 10952; <u>stamp seals</u> : Amman 10087, *IAA 96-1956. Total: 4.
crescent moon	<u>cylinder seals</u> : Damascus 2924, PLU (RS 26.[501]); <u>stamp seals</u> : IAA 33.3150, PLU (84). Total: 4.
circle with cross	<u>cylinder seals</u> : PLU (63). Total: 1.
globules forming rosette	<u>cylinder seals</u> : PLU (69). Total: 1.
uncertain object	<u>cylinder seals</u> : Ashmolean 1920.24, Newell 338. Total: 2.

¹⁰⁰ See further the discussion in section 2.2.17.

One notes that each of these symbols resembles something that is found in the sky (hence it is appropriately indicated by upward directionality), and each may function as a symbol of a deity.¹⁰¹ This fundamental structuring function of Palm Out, creating a bifurcated interaction structure, informs interpretations 6, 9, and 10, which see the hand as establishing some connection with an upward-located deity while a speech act is addressed to somebody on the same plane as the agent. In effect, the gesture's shaping function cuts the grooves for which these interpretations provide the content.

Many types of media in which Palm Out is depicted serve to extend the "reach" of authoritative centers to shape interactions in the divine and economic spheres. On the Yahawwimilk stela, for example, the king is shown as perpetually performing good deeds for the Lady of Byblos, while the goddess is shown performatively reciprocating, as the stela states, "in the sight of gods and men" (the stela being placed in public view in the temple).¹⁰² The use of Palm Out by deities, kings, and officials in glyptic art adds authority to transactions while at the same time reinforcing the authority of the king and/or his official as vicars ultimately of the deity. Images of deities performing the Palm Out gesture that appeared as figurines and on apotropaic amulets could be used to invoke the deity's power against enemies. An example of this is the Ugaritic seated 'Ilu figurine arrayed with two smiting gods in a protective formation underneath a building.¹⁰³ Such images could also presumably invoke the deity's power to enact good for those who controlled the images.

¹⁰¹ Cf. Van Buren, *Symbols of the Gods*, 31-32 (bird), 60-64 (crescent moon), 82-85 (star), 87-90 (sun disk), 94-95 (winged sun disk).

¹⁰² See also the discussion in section 4.3.7.2. As to the original provenance of the stela, see Dunand, "Stèle de Yahawwimilk," 57-71.

¹⁰³ See section 4.3.7.1.

5.4. Palms Out

Eight Northwest Semitic phrases describe a raising of the hands in the context of prayer to a deity. In order of frequency, these are:

pəraś kappayim (*adv*)*T_{dir}* 'el-/lə*T_{add}* “spread the palms toward *T_{dir}* to *T_{add}*”
nōśō` yōdayim (+*adv*)_{prayer} “lift up the hands (+*adv*)_{prayer}”
nōśō` kappayim “lift up the palms”
pəraś yōdayim 'el-*T* “spread out the hands toward *T*”
pəraś kappayim “spread out the palms”
šit̄taḥ kappayim “spread forth the palms”
heri`š yōdayim “stretch out the hands with quick movement(s)”
mo`al yōdayim “putting up of the hands”

In chapter 4, we linked this cluster of phrases with the iconographic gesture that we refer to as Palms Out, in which the hands are raised with the palms facing away from the agent.

Most scholars who have discussed the textual and iconographic occurrences of this gesture refer to it as an “attitude of prayer” or use a similar designation. Its more precise significance, however, is the subject of various proposals. Altogether, at least ten interpretations have been proposed for the iconographic gesture or for the phrases that we have linked with it:

1. Conjuring. According to Keel, this gesture in some cases in iconography “may originally have had an exorcistic [in the German edition, “*beschwörenden*”] character.” From this original function, it developed over time into two ritual subtypes: an apotropaic (“*abwehrend-bannend*”) gesture used by the cowering captive in smiting scenes, and a protective blessing (“*schützend, segnend-lobpreisend*”) gesture appearing in scenes of prayer before a deity. The original exorcistic function was always preserved in the expressive significance of the gesture: “The gesture of raised arms with palms forward is as appropriate to aversion as to veneration. In the final analysis, it expresses the attempt to restrain a superior, numinous opposite by means of conjuring, thus rendering it serviceable or averting it.”¹⁰⁴
2. Expression of desire to be picked up. Keel considers other examples of Palms Out to belong to a different contextual type, that of “lamentation and petition.”

¹⁰⁴ Keel, *Symbolism*, 312-13; Othmar Keel, *Die Welt der altorientalischen Bildsymbolik und das Alte Testament: Am Beispiel der Psalmen* (Zürich: Benziger Verlag, 1972), 290-91. Compare Keel, *Wirkmächtige Siegeszeichen*, 95-100, 139.

In these cases, the gesture expresses a desire for contact with the deity, such as being “pulled up from the depths.”¹⁰⁵ This follows Greiff, who suggests that the gesture is ontogenetically related to a child’s gesture that Jones would later describe as the “arms-raised posture” that “leads to the mother’s lifting and carrying the child.”¹⁰⁶

3. Supplication. Gruber, following Dhorme, argues that the gesture phrases *paraś kappayim* and *paraś kappayim* describe a gesture of supplication that expresses a desire for the empty hands to be filled.¹⁰⁷
4. Raising hands as if to present an offering. Greiff also suggests that the hands could be raised as if to give an object, which is practically the opposite of the idea espoused by Dhorme and Gruber.¹⁰⁸
5. Pointing to God’s abode. Gruber argues that the phrase *naśo’ yodayim* describes a gesture whose “essential meaning...is to point to the deity’s abode.”¹⁰⁹ Westphal had earlier suggested a similar deictic function, that of pointing out the one from whom a blessing is expected in return for an offering that has been brought.¹¹⁰
6. Emancipated contact. Greiff, arguing against a statement made by Stade, misinterprets that statement, thus in effect suggesting a new interpretation: the lifting or spreading of the hands in prayer originated from stroking an idol (the gesture presumably becoming disengaged and yielding to greater distance between the worshipper and the object of worship over time).¹¹¹
7. Sign of submission. The idea the raising the open hands to show them empty of weapons, like a warrior surrendering on the battlefield, has been cited with disapproval by Greiff and Keel.¹¹² One could perhaps render this idea more fitting to a Northwest Semitic ritual context by reformulating it as a “gesture of approach,” a display of the empty hands to demonstrate submission or peaceful intent on approaching the deity in the temple.¹¹³

¹⁰⁵ Keel, *Symbolism*, 322. Another form this contact might take, according to Keel, is “receiving something in [the suppliant’s] outstretched hands.” For this concept, see interpretation number 3 below. However, Keel maintains that the gesture in this context simply expresses the desire for contact, and the specific form of contact is “not particularly important.”

¹⁰⁶ Anton Greiff, *Das Gebet im Alten Testament* (Münster: Aschendorffschen Buchdruckerei, 1914), 39; N. G. Blurton Jones, “Non-Verbal Communication in Children,” in *Non-Verbal Communication*, ed. R. A. Hinde (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 274.

¹⁰⁷ Dhorme, *Religion assyro-babylonienne*, 247-49; Dhorme, *Religions*, 248-49; Gruber, *Nonverbal Communication*, 33-37.

¹⁰⁸ Greiff, *Gebet*, 39.

¹⁰⁹ Gruber, *Nonverbal Communication*, 37. Cf. p. 36, where Gruber says that the phrase *naśo’ yodayim* “goes back to a salute acknowledging the deity’s lofty abode.”

¹¹⁰ Gustav Westphal, *Jahwes Wohnstätten nach den Anschauungen der alten Hebräer* (Giessen: Alfred Töpelmann, 1908), 132-33.

¹¹¹ Greiff, *Gebet*, 39. In the source that Greiff quotes, which is B. Stade, *Biblische Theologie des Alten Testaments* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1905), 1:151, Stade is simply saying that Egyptian iconography shows the directing of the palms toward the divine statue.

¹¹² Greiff, *Gebet*, 39; Keel, *Symbolism*, 313.

¹¹³ Cf. Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, trans. Rosemary Sheed (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1958), 370-71; Hugh Nibley, “On the Sacred and the Symbolic,” in *Temples of the Ancient World: Ritual and Symbolism*, ed. Donald W. Parry (Salt Lake City: Deseret, 1994), 557-59; Hugh Nibley, “Temples Everywhere,” *Insights* 25/1 (2005): 14.

8. Display of purity of hands and heart. Tvedtnes, drawing on several passages from the Hebrew Bible, suggests that the purpose of the Palms Out gesture is to expose the hands and heart to divine view, so that the deity may judge the agent's purity as the latter approaches the divine presence.¹¹⁴
9. "Life." Demisch understands the raising of hands as a virtually universal sign for "life"; in a ritual context, the gesture is equivalent to crying "Life!"—a request for life to be granted.¹¹⁵
10. Salute. In his brief description of the Ahiram sarcophagus, Pritchard states, "the last four figures merely salute the king with upraised and out-turned hands."¹¹⁶

Keel's interpretation of Palms Out as a "conjuring" gesture works well to explain the variety of contexts in which Palms Out occurs in iconography. In particular, it accounts for the use of the gesture in benign prayer to a deity on the one hand and by a cowering captive about to be smitten on the other. However, taking only the iconographic evidence, a more straightforward explanation of the gesture's function would be possible, namely as raising the hands to shield the eyes and face (from the radiance of the deity in the case of prayer, or from the blow of a weapon in the case of the cowering captive). In his considerably more complicated scheme, Keel is likely influenced by the interpretation of Moses' gesture in the battle against the Amalekites (Exodus 17:11-12) as a raising of both hands.¹¹⁷ Keel has suggested two different analyses of Moses' gesture. In his 1972 book on iconography and symbolism in the book of Psalms (published in English translation in 1985), a caption to a smiting scene in which the captive raises his hands in Palm Out mentions the "apotropäische Wirkung" of the gesture and directs the reader to compare Exodus 17:8-13.¹¹⁸ In his subsequent book *Wirkmächtige Siegeszeichen im Alten Testament*, published in 1974, Moses is understood as empowering or protecting Joshua as the latter smites

¹¹⁴ John Tvedtnes, "Temple Prayer in Ancient Times," in *The Temple in Time and Eternity*, ed. Donald W. Parry and Stephen D. Ricks (Provo: The Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1999), 84.

¹¹⁵ Demisch, *Erhobene Hände*, 107-68.

¹¹⁶ *ANEP*, 302.

¹¹⁷ Keel, *Wirkmächtige Siegeszeichen*, 108, 139-40.

¹¹⁸ Keel, *Welt der altorientalischen Bildsymbolik*, 291, fig. 417a; cf. Keel, *Symbolism*, 312, fig. 417a.

the Amalekites, on the model of Egyptian scenes showing a person in Palms Out behind a smiting figure.¹¹⁹ Keel's earlier linking of the gesture used by Moses with that of the figure about to be smitten implies that the gesture can be apotropaic specifically in a hostile sense (not just warding off evil, but inflicting damage on the evil entity), a sense which cannot apply in the case of prayer before a deity. The later analysis of Moses' gesture as having a protective significance might fit with the context of prayer if understood in the wider sense of blessing, but it cannot apply to the iconographic examples in which the cowering captive performs the gesture (since it would not make sense to protect or bless one who is about to smash the agent). In both analyses, however, the various proposed functions of the gesture could derive from an original sense of "conjuring," hence the historical development envisaged by Keel.

The idea of a potentially hostile significance of Palms Out might also find support in some interpretations of the raised-hands gesture figuratively performed by the sun (or, in some modern emendations, the sea) in Habakkuk 3:10-11. According to Theodore Hiebert, this text incorporates a holy war motif of Yahweh marching into battle with his heavenly host, the sun being one member of the host. This implies that the lifting up of the sun's "hands" (rays) is a militant gesture, although Hiebert does not elaborate on this.¹²⁰ In J. J. M. Roberts' interpretation of the text, the sea lifts up its "hands" (waves) in a hostile gesture against Yahweh, harking back to the "primordial cosmogonic battle" between Yahweh and the sea.¹²¹

Our consideration of the textual data and the context of Exodus 17:11-12 leads to an interpretation different from that of Keel: Moses raises one hand in Fist Up, not two hands in

¹¹⁹ Keel, *Wirkmächtige Siegeszeichen*, 103, 139-40, with illustrations 51-53.

¹²⁰ Theodore Hiebert, *God of My Victory: The Ancient Hymn in Habakkuk 3* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986), pp. 99-101. Hiebert's interpretation of the gesture is somewhat problematic. He draws support for his interpretation from the motif of the sun "with its hands outstretched" in Egyptian iconography (*ibid.*, 30-31), but in this motif, the sun's rays have a sustaining and blessing role that has nothing to do with combat.

¹²¹ J. J. M. Roberts, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1991), 141. In this connection, Roberts cites Psalm 93:3.

Palms Out (see sections 2.2.7 and 4.2.7). Also, the hostile interpretations of Habakkuk 3:10-11 are not the most plausible interpretations of this passage. According to other interpreters, with whom we agree, these verses describe the terrified responses of the elements to Yahweh's actions in verses 8-9.¹²² The gesture, whether it is figuratively ascribed to the sun or to the sea, is most likely submissive and not hostile (see section 2.2.18). Without these two textual supports, the examples of Palms Out easily fall into the simple category of "prayer" (either in the sense of ritual prayer, or in the archaic sense of the English word as an appeal, such as for mercy). The historical development proposed by Keel thus becomes unnecessary. This does not, of course, exclude the possibility that the notion of conjuring was understood as part of the gesture's figurative significance by ancient Northwest Semites. Indeed, it appears likely that the gesture as used in prayer was understood as having a conjuring function, although more probably in the sense of provoking an appearance of the deity than in the sense of changing or averting the deity's dangerous power. In the Ugaritic epic of Kirta, for example, the raising of hands and the presentation of a sacrificial meal result in "bringing down" the deity (according to one reading of this text).¹²³ It is also possible that the sense of shielding the eyes was applied to this gesture in the prayer context, either as a reaction to a glorious appearance or in anticipation of one (in the latter case, the gesture could even have been a way of performatively invoking a theophany, the presupposing nature of the shielding of the eyes being transferred to a creative function).

The ontogenetic relationship of Palms Out to the child's "pick me up" gesture, as posited by Greiff and Keel, harmonizes with sentiments expressed in some passages of the Psalms. In Psalm 30:1-2, the Psalmist praises Yahweh for lifting and healing him in response to prayer:

¹²² Francis I. Andersen, *The Anchor Bible: Habakkuk* (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 326-33.

¹²³ *KTU* 1.14 ii 21-26, iv 2-8: *ša ydk šmm dbḥ ltr abk il šrd b'l b dbḥk bn dgn bmsdk* "Lift up your hands to heaven, sacrifice to the Bull, your father 'Ilu. Bring down Ba'lu with your sacrifice, the son of Dagan with your prey." The word in question is *šrd*, which some analyze as a cognate of Hebrew *šrt* (D-stem), meaning "serve," while others derive it from the root *yrd* (Š-stem), meaning "bring down." See *DULAT*, 2:843.

dilliyṭṭni’...*šiwwa* ‘*tī*’ *elē*’*kō wattirpō* ‘*eni*’ “you have drawn me up...I cried to you, then you healed me.” Psalm 130:1-2 evokes similar imagery: *mimma* ‘*a*’*maqṭi*’*m qərō* ‘*tī*’*kō YHWH* ‘*a*’*donōy šim* ‘*ō*’*ḥ baqo*’*li*’ *tihye*’*nō*’*ḥ* ‘*ōznē*’*kō qaššubo*’*t ləqo*’*l taḥ*’*anu*’*nōy* “From the depths I call to you, Yahweh; Lord, hear my voice! May your ears be inclined to the sound of my supplications!” Compare also Psalm 69:1-2, in which the Psalmist pleads with Yahweh to rescue him/her from the “deep mire” or the “deep waters” (the second phrase is *ma* ‘*a*’*maqṭe*’*y mayim*, employing the same lexeme as *mimma* ‘*a*’*maqṭi*’*m* in Psalm 130:1). It may be significant that all three of these passages occur at the very beginning of the respective psalms, as the mention of being drawn up or the plea to be rescued from the depths might, perhaps, have coincided with a gesture of lifting the hands when these psalms were recited.¹²⁴ In any case, since Palms Out is frequently associated with supplicatory prayer, one can imagine that the ideas expressed in these supplications (being pulled up from the depths, healing through contact) converge with those which the gesture figures forth.

Gruber appeals to the imagery of putting out the empty hands to be filled, which would fit with a gesture whose form is similar to Palms In, but it does not fit with Palms Out. We have argued in chapter 4 that a direct connection between Palms In and the phrases which Gruber cites is not evident (his theory is much more appropriate for Mesopotamia). It is still possible that the basic meaning of supplication applies. However, we would have to look elsewhere for the imagery or symbolic premise that gives rise to this meaning (see, for example, interpretations 2, 5, and 9). The same is true for the opposite analysis of the gesture, appealing to the imagery of giving an offering: the imagery is more appropriate for Palms In and thus does not fit the

¹²⁴ The superscription of Psalm 30 specifies that it is a “song for the dedication of the temple.” This recalls Solomon’s dedicatory prayer in 1 Kings 8, which was demarcated by a gesture of lifting the hands (1 Kings 8:22, 54). We also note the phrase *šiwwa* ‘*el*’- “cry to” in Psalm 30:3, a phrase which is elsewhere parallel to *nōšō*’ *yodayim* “lift up the hands” (see Psalm 28:2).

Northwest Semitic evidence, even though there are definite contextual links between Palms Out and the presentation of offerings.

Those who view the prayer gesture of raising the hands as a means of pointing to God's dwelling draw support from the frequent use of adverbial constituents indicating the Target in the gesture phrases. These constituents are of three types: (1) those headed by the preposition *lā* "to," which indicate a divine Addressee; (2) those headed by the preposition *'ēl-* "to," which indicate either a divine Addressee or the temple; (3) those which occur as adverbials unmarked by prepositions (with the optional presence of the adverbial suffix *-ō^h*), which typically indicate the heavenly expanse as the positional referent for the raising of the hands.¹²⁵ This distribution of markers is consistent in Ugaritic, Old Aramaic, and Biblical Hebrew.¹²⁶ The Palms Out gesture in iconography also gives a sense of directionality, the palms of the hands facing toward a target. In some cases, there is also a sun disk above the gesturing hands.¹²⁷ With the combination of textual and iconographic sources, however, it is evident that the issue of this gesture's deixis is considerably more complex than a one-directional "pointing." The deity's abode, for example, may be conceived of as being in front of the agent or above him/her.

Greiff's misinterpretation of Stade's statement is a perfect straw man. It is speculative to an extreme, since we have no way of knowing whether the ancestors of those who performed Palms Out ever had the privilege of stroking their cult images. It seems unlikely that Northwest Semites would have imagined this as a conceptual background to the gesture, given the awe-

¹²⁵ In group 3, the constituent is uniformly *šōmayim/šōmaymō^h* (or, in Ugaritic, *šmm/šmmh*), with the exception of Psalm 134:2, where the word is *qodeš*. For the latter case, Dahood argues that the reference is to Yahweh's heavenly temple. See Mitchell Dahood, *The Anchor Bible: Psalms III, 101-150* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1965), 255; cf. BDB, 871, definition 2.a.

¹²⁶ See sections 2.2.9, 2.2.18, 2.2.19, 2.2.21, 2.2.22, and 2.2.26.

¹²⁷ Examples include the Balu'ah stela, the cylinder seal Damascus 2898. Cf. also New Kingdom scarabs in Egyptian style such as Keel, *Corpus I*, 719 (no. 77); Keel, *Corpus II*, 157 (no. 134). The latter, although not strictly Northwest Semitic, are of Levantine provenance and are relevant to the development of the iconography of this gesture. One may also compare the stela from Late Bronze Age Hazor showing two hands outstretched toward a sun disk in a crescent (*ANEP*, no. 871).

inspiring nature of holy beings and objects.¹²⁸ Other interpretations discussed above do imply that direct contact with the deity might have been seen as an ideal (see interpretation 9 under Palm Out and interpretation 2 under Palms Out). However, each of these interpretations leave the responsibility of initiating direct contact to the divine being; for a commoner to initiate such contact of his/her own volition would likely have been seen as presumptuous at best. The interpretation must therefore be set aside, although it has interest as a picturesque reconstruction of this gesture's origin.

Despite the dismissive remarks of Greiff and Keel, there is no reason to doubt that presenting the hands empty of weapons is, and was anciently, a viable interpretation of Palms Out. To be sure, most scholars who follow this line of interpretation draw on comparison with Indo-European cultures. Greiff compares this understanding of the gesture with the “fully Indo-European custom” of folding the hands in prayer (he apparently assumes that the latter is a display of incapacity to fight). He asserts that since this custom is “unknown to the Semites,” an interpretation of the prayer gesture with lifted hands in light of a child's “pick me up” gesture should be preferred.¹²⁹ For Révész, however, the same example of the folded-hands gesture provides a model for a general tendency in the historical development of gestures. According to this model, prayer gestures originate from greeting gestures which, in turn, originate from gestures of submission (the folded-hands gesture is assumed to derive from presenting the hands to another for binding).¹³⁰ Révész's model is not necessarily out of place in Near Eastern societies. It may find indirect support in the semantics of the root *šlm*, derivatives of which in

¹²⁸ Cf. Jack Sasson, “On the Use of Images in Israel and the Ancient Near East: A Response to Karel Van der Toorn,” in *Sacred Time, Sacred Place*, ed. Barry M. Gittlen (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2002), 65. See also Exodus 20:18-21, in which the people react with fear to the divine presence at Sinai.

¹²⁹ Greiff, *Gebet*, 39.

¹³⁰ Géza Révész, *The Human Hand: A Psychological Study* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1958), 120.

various Semitic languages have to do with submission, greeting, and ritual offerings.¹³¹ One could suggest that the development of the gesture's use in its contexts is parallel to the development of derivatives of *šlm* in their contexts.

The interpretation of Palms Out as a display of purity works very well with biblical passages. Psalm 24:3-4, for example, declares that “clean hands and a pure heart” are necessary for entrance into the sacred space of Yahweh's temple. In Isaiah 1:15, Yahweh chastises people for spreading their hands in prayer while their hands are “full of blood.” Many other passages make reference to the critical attention God gives to his people's hearts (symbolic of their thoughts) and hands (symbolic of their actions).¹³²

Interpretations 7 and 8 both focus on the emptiness of the hands (either of weapons or of ritual impurity) as a prerequisite for approaching the divine presence. The conception of this gesture as a “gesture of approach” finds some limited support in the Psalms and in Levantine and Egyptian art, in which Palms Out seems to be deployed at one stage in an approach toward the deity. In Psalm 63, the Psalmist begins by expressing a desire to seek out Yahweh with the goal of seeing him in the sanctuary (verses 2-3). In verses 4-5, the Psalmist mentions performing the Palms Out gesture while praising Yahweh; the phrases *šəpəṭay yəšabbəhu^wnəkə* “my lips praise you,” *ʾābərəkəkə* “I bless you,” and *ʾəsšəʾ kappay* “I lift up my hands” occur in poetic parallelism. Finally, near the end of the Psalm (verses 8-9), the Psalmist's interaction with God is described using imagery of close proximity: *u^wbəšəl kənəpe^ykə ʾarannen* “I sing in the shadow of your wings,” *bī^y təməkə^h yəmi^ynəkə* “your right hand holds me.” The Ahiaram sarcophagus shows a procession toward the deceased king Ahiaram; on each of the two long panels of the relief, a group of figures standing together near the end (i.e., the right side of the panel) performs Palms

¹³¹ BDB, 1022-24.

¹³² Cf. 1 Samuel 16:7; Psalms 26:2; 51:19; Proverbs 6:16-19; Job 11:11-15.

Out, suggesting that the gesture corresponds to the more distant stages of approach. The Egyptian tomb paintings of Menkheperresonb and Huy, which show Northwest Semites (and other non-Egyptians) approaching the Pharaoh, depict those furthest from the Pharaoh in a standing posture, holding offerings and sometimes raising one hand in Palm Out; those closer to the Pharaoh stand or kneel while performing the Palms Out gesture; and those closest to him prostrate themselves.¹³³

The cross-cultural examples which Demisch adduces to show that the raising of hands is a symbol of “life” are not convincing, since various other interpretations could be applied to every one of the examples, and the idea of a single abstract meaning attaching to the gesture consistently across ages and cultures seems unlikely *a priori*. However, in the specific case of the Northwest Semitic Palms Out gesture, the interpretation as a symbolic request that life be granted does rank among other interpretations as a possibility. In Lamentations 2:19, the personified “wall of the daughter of Zion” is called upon to lift her hands while petitioning for the “life” (*nepeš*) of her children. In the Egyptian tomb paintings of Menkheperresonb and Huy discussed in the previous paragraph, as well as temple and tomb reliefs from the same period, the Palms Out gesture is accompanied by supplications for the “breath of life” (the words being indicated in inscriptions).¹³⁴ In these cases, according to this interpretation, the gesture would be “redundant” in the sense that it repeats something already enunciated in the speech act, although such repetition would itself carry meaning; in other cases, the gesture would add content to the speech act.

¹³³ Cf. David Calabro, “Gestures of Praise: Lifting and Spreading the Hands in Biblical Prayer,” in *Ascending the Mountain of the Lord: Temple, Praise, and Worship in the Old Testament*, ed. David R. Seely, Jeffrey R. Chadwick, and Matthew J. Grey (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 2013), 119. The tomb paintings of Menkheperresonb and Huy are also discussed in section 4.6.6.2 herein.

¹³⁴ See the discussion in section 4.6.6.2.

Pritchard’s cursory assessment of Palms Out in the Ahiram relief as “merely salut[ing] the king with upraised and out-turned hands” is quite ambiguous. Pritchard might have in mind a salute like the American military salute, an acknowledgement of rank that functions on its own without accompanying speech. If so, then this fails to account for the fact that Palms Out typically accompanied an utterance, as indicated by textual sources in which the gesture phrase is in structural alignment with words like *təpillə^h* “prayer” and *təḥinnə^h* “supplication.”¹³⁵ Nevertheless, the Palms Out gesture does seem to correlate consistently with a lower-status agent addressing a higher-status target, so that interpreting the gesture’s basic function as one of acknowledging rank may be appropriate. In addition, it is possible that Pritchard’s verb “salute” is to be taken as the correlate of “salutation,” the gesture thus being one of greeting or blessing (we recall here the common interpretation of Palm Out discussed above). This would be suggestive in a number of ways, as it would potentially tie in the two-handed gestures of prayer and priestly blessing, both of which are associated with the verb *berak* “bless.”¹³⁶ However, a simpler approach to the data would see Palms Out as being restricted to situations of lower-status person addressing higher-status, with the speech act being characteristically one of prayer (as opposed to greeting or blessing).¹³⁷

This leaves nos. 2, 5, 7, 8, and 9 as the most plausible options from the list of interpretations above. Interpretations 1 and 10 may be viable if modified—that is, if “conjuring” is understood in the sense of invoking an appearance of deity rather than averting its harmful effects, and if “salute” is understood as an acknowledgement of rank that is independent of, yet coinciding with, an uttered prayer (thus not “merely salut[ing]”). Interpretations 3, 4, and 6 are

¹³⁵ See sections 3.3.2 and 4.6.6.2.

¹³⁶ See the discussion of the priestly blessing gesture in Leviticus 9:22, as compared with the prayer gesture of lifting the hands, in section 2.2.18.

¹³⁷ The priestly blessing gesture would then be separate, perhaps marked by a distinct finger articulation like the trident-shaped one that is employed in the modern synagogue.

not supported by the data as they now stand; these three should therefore be set aside, pending the emergence of new data.

The basic form of Palms Out is very similar to Palm Out. In both, the hand is raised and extended with the palm turned outward. However, there are also some critical differences between the two gestures, beyond the simple fact that Palms Out employs two hands instead of one. The distinct formal features Palms Out correspond to the ways in which it uniquely interacts with the participant structure in ritual, as seen in the textual and iconographic data. Specifically, two formal differences from Palm Out are evident: (1) an increase in the total surface area of the palms and the space between them, which has an analog in the distinctive use of the verbs *p̄ras̄/peras̄* “spread (out)” and *šittah* “spread forth”;¹³⁸ and (2) an increase in the degree of movement, which has analogs in the use of the verb *heriʿs̄* “stretch out with quick movement(s)” and possibly in the modality of the D-stem verbs *peras̄* and *šittah*.¹³⁹

The “spreading out” of the hands and the increase of movement mean that Palms Out, unlike its one-handed counterpart, utilizes a comparatively large amount of space in the zone between the agent and the target(s). Correspondingly, the target is also “spread out,” just as a wide roller spreads paint over a large surface. In the textual sources, whereas the basic gesture phrase for Palm Out governs a forward-located Target/Addressee with the preposition *lā* and an upward-located Target/Directional with the preposition *ʿel-*, both being positionally stable participants in the interaction, with Palms Out the Target marked by *ʿel-* is much more versatile:

¹³⁸ In section 3.3.2.2, we argue that the verb *p̄ras̄* most likely refers to the hands being opened wide and not to the hands being spread apart from each other. However, the form of the gesture itself (as evident in the iconography) certainly involved the use of two hands with a space between them. The nature of the analog between the gesture and the verb is that in thinking of the gesture, one thinks of “spreading out” and “spreading forth” (these verbs are not used, for example, in the phrases that describe the ritual gesture Palm Out).

¹³⁹ Aside from the use of the verb *heriʿs̄* in Psalm 68:32, the comparison with a swimmer’s strokes in Isaiah 25:10-11 strongly indicates that Palms Out could involve a high degree of movement. For discussion, see section 4.6.6.7.

it may be located upward, in front, or somewhere in between.¹⁴⁰ This distribution reflects the fact that the Palms Out gesture itself fixes the target's location only vaguely, as over a great expanse. Further, the Target/Addressee of the gesture phrase describing Palms Out, if not a divine name, can be a place noun.¹⁴¹ While the avoidance of the deity's name may index greater respect on the level of the spoken language, the choice of a place noun also indexes a wider conception of the target on the level of the gesture itself. In iconography, the target of Palms Out is often larger than life (such as when the cowering captive performs the gesture toward a large smiting figure who towers above). The target therefore tends to be more expansive than that of Palm Out.

In magnifying the target, the Palms Out gesture also asserts a difference between the target and the agent. While the target is large and lofty, the agent is small and lowly. The maximal displacement of the agent's body through the movement of both arms also indexes his/her humble status with respect to the target.¹⁴² The divine name or place noun used with gesture phrases, which is different from the human Agent, is a correlate of this function of the gesture. In the iconographic examples, the target of Palms Out is never shown doing this gesture. There are also marked differences in posture, vertical position, size, and indicators of status between the agent and the target, the target being typically in a more privileged posture (seated if the agent is standing, standing if the agent is kneeling), higher, larger, or in a higher-status panoply than the agent.¹⁴³

¹⁴⁰ In 1 Kings 8:38, people are said to “spread their hands toward this house (i.e. the temple).” The forward directionality here contrasts with the upward directionality in Lamentations 3:41: *niššō' ləbōbenu^w 'el-kappayim 'el-'el baššōmōyim* “Let us lift up our hearts with our palms to God in heaven!” It may also be possible for both positions to obtain in the same interaction, such as when the deity descends in answer to the agent's prayer (cf. Kirta, *KTU* 1.14 ii 21-26, iv 2-8; 1 Kings 8).

¹⁴¹ The clearest examples are *dəbi^rr qədšəkō* “the cella of your sanctuary,” Psalm 28:2; *habbayit hazze^h* “this temple,” 1 Kings 8:38.

¹⁴² Cf. Judith Irvine, “Strategies of Status Manipulation in the Wolof Greeting,” in *Explorations in the Ethnography of Speaking*, ed. Richard Bauman and Joel Sherzer, second edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 167-91.

¹⁴³ For an overview of the evidence for the target and agent of Palms Out, see sections 4.6.6.4 and 4.6.6.6.

A further implication of the distinctive formal features of Palms Out is that it more actively focuses the attention of the addressee. The gesture urgently summons the addressee's gaze (especially when movement is involved) and focuses it on the hands. As discussed above, Isaiah 1:15 presupposes that a sentient target is virtually compelled to look; in order to refuse the gesture, one must cover one's eyes. The combination of the agent's low status with the active summoning of the higher-status target's attention implies that the gesture seeks to elicit social justice in the form of some favor or blessing.

A large proportion of the examples of Palms Out occur on ivory panels, carved for elites. Many of these panels are made to be laid out in flanking position, reflecting a similar interaction structure as on composite scenes showing flanking figures in Palms Out surrounding a deity or royal figure. Another frequent medium for representations of this gesture is the stamp seal. The Palms Out gesture can be understood as extending its "reach" through these media as with Palm Out, but in the opposite direction with respect to relative status. By carving an image of a person in Palms Out for a royal or elite patron, the artisan is manifesting devotion, both on the artisan's own behalf and on behalf of the patron; yet the artisan does so in hopes that the patron, blessed from above, will reward the work of the artisan's skilled hands. A chain of skilled labor and patronage carries the presentation of piety upward through the ranks of society and ultimately to deity, at the same time invoking the attention of those in the higher ranks to distribute social justice downward.

5.5. Confronted Figure Handclasp

Five phrases in the Hebrew Bible refer to a handclasp exchanged between Yahweh and his chosen human servant, with whom he enters into a covenant. These five phrases are the following:

hēḥ^εzī^νq (bə)R T ləP “grasp the R of T to P”
tōmak (+adv)_{covenant} “hold (+adv)_{covenant}”
tōmakō^h yōmī^νn bəT “of the right hand, hold T”
’ōḥaz bəR T “grasp the R of T”
’ōḥ^azō^h yōmī^νn T “of the right hand, grasp T”

In chapter 4, we adduced iconographic evidence to show that this gesture involved the joining of right hands between confronted parties; we refer to this gesture as the Confronted Figure Handclasp.

Most interpretations of ritual handclasps in Northwest Semitic sources do not account for the Confronted Figure Handclasp in Levantine iconography. For the most part, they rely on textual sources, sometimes comparing various types of handclasps in the art of Israel’s neighbors. There have been at least six distinct interpretations:

1. Transmission of life and/or strength. Teissier suggests that the divine handclasp has a function similar to that of the divine embrace, namely “to transmit ‘life’ or life and strength at liminal stages during rituals.”¹⁴⁴
2. Mixing of spheres. Pedersen, followed by Vorwahl, suggests that the striking of hands in the context of an oath or covenant serves to mingle what pertains to each other’s kinship circles. The gesture is magically effective because the hand is charged with one’s personality and power.¹⁴⁵
3. Affirmation. For Falk, the clasping of right hands originates in a legal context as a “means of expressing affirmation” between a judge and an accused person or between people negotiating a contract or covenant.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁴ Beatrice Teissier, *Egyptian Iconography of Syro-Palestinian Cylinder Seals of the Middle Bronze Age* (Fribourg: University Press, 1996), 50. Cf. Vorwahl, *Gebärdensprache*, 24.

¹⁴⁵ Johannes Pedersen, *Der Eid bei den Semiten* (Strassburg: Karl J. Trübner, 1914), 21-22, 24, 47-48; Vorwahl, *Gebärdensprache*, 28-29.

¹⁴⁶ Falk, “Gestures Expressing Affirmation,” 268-69.

4. Token to permit passage. Nibley describes the handclasp as one of a series of gestures performed as one approaches a sacred or guarded location in ancient Israel.¹⁴⁷
5. Support. According to Eaton, the divine handclasp is a sort of metaphoric oracle to the king whose hand is grasped, a promise that God will support the king and lead him by the hand.¹⁴⁸
6. Assumption. Dahood views some verbs in the Psalms (*tōmak*, *ʿōhaz*, and *lōqah*) as technical terms for “assumption,” expressing the Psalmist’s desire to be received into the divine council and receive immortality like Enoch and Elijah, thus bypassing the otherwise inevitable descent to Sheol.¹⁴⁹

These interpretations can be broadly divided into two groups: those that focus on a physiological and/or social effect achieved through the joining of hands (interpretations 1-3), and those that focus on locomotion (interpretations 4-6). The first group generally works well with the gesture’s form and the range of contexts in which the gesture occurs. The interpretations in the second group, although they contain important insights that harmonize with the gesture’s contexts, require qualification in light of the data gathered in chapters 2-4.

Teissier’s interpretation of the Confronted Figure Handclasp, namely as a means of imparting life or strength to the addressee, is based on Egyptian iconographic and textual sources in which the Pharaoh is embraced by a deity as part of a coronation rite.¹⁵⁰ However, this idea also finds support in the Northwest Semitic sphere. In Isaiah 42:1, at the beginning of an oracle in which Yahweh mentions grasping his servant’s hand (the mention of the gesture is in verse 6), Yahweh says of his servant, “I have put my spirit upon him” (*nōtattiʿ ruʿhīʿ ʿōlōʿw*). This is

¹⁴⁷ Hugh Nibley, “On the Sacred and the Symbolic,” in *Temples of the Ancient World: Ritual and Symbolism*, ed. Donald W. Parry (Salt Lake City: Deseret, 1994), 557-59; Hugh Nibley, “Temples Everywhere,” *Insights* 25/1 (2005): 14.

¹⁴⁸ John H. Eaton, *Kingship and the Psalms*, second edition (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1986), 143-44; John H. Eaton, *Festal Drama in Deutero-Isaiah* (London: SPCK, 1979), 31, 48, 55-56. Cf. Zeev Falk, “Gestures Expressing Affirmation,” *JSS* 4/3 (1959): 268.

¹⁴⁹ Mitchell Dahood, *The Anchor Bible: Psalms I (1-50)* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1965), xxxvi, 33, 146, 252-53, 301-2; Mitchell Dahood, *The Anchor Bible: Psalms II (51-100)*, third edition (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1974), 85, 100, 194.

¹⁵⁰ She cites Alexandre Moret, *Du caractère religieux de la royauté pharaonique* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1902), 80-81, 94, 100, 101, 160. For Moret, the concept of embrace (“embrassement”) includes forms of handclasp; see, for example, the caption to fig. 42 in Moret, *Caractère religieux*, 161.

compatible with certain biblical texts that describe the gesture of laying hands on the head of a target, which texts are commonly cited in support of a “transfer” interpretation.¹⁵¹ The C-stem verb *hēḥ^εzī^yq* “grasp,” which appears in phrases describing the handclasp, can also mean “make strong, strengthen”; the gesture would therefore have been susceptible to exegesis based on wordplay with the denotative phrase.¹⁵² The words *təmakti^ykō bi^ymi^yn šidqi^y* “I have held you with my righteous right hand” are parallel to *’immaṣṣti^ykō* “I have strengthened you” in Isaiah 41:10.

The idea of a mixing of spheres, as expounded by Pedersen and Vorwahl, relies heavily on comparison with Arabic culture. For Pedersen, this idea explains a wide variety of oath gestures. Whatever the general applicability of this category to ancient Northwest Semitic culture may be, an interpretation along these lines applies reasonably well to the Confronted Figure Handclasp. For example, the Hyksos scarabs that show confronted figures with identical features, their hands merged into a continuous line (see section 4.8.2), definitely give an impression of unity or commingling of the two parties. The idea of a mixing of spheres is also compatible with kinship motifs that occur in the literary contexts, such as *bō^εalti^y bōm* “I had become their husband” in the context of *hēḥ^εzī^yqi^y bəyōdōm* “I grasped their hand” in Jeremiah 31:32.¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ Leviticus 16:21: *wəṣmak ’ah^aron ’et-šte^y yōdōw ’al ro ’š haššō ’y^r haḥay wəhitwaddō^h ’ōlō^w ’et-kōl-’awonot bəne^y yiśrō ’el wə ’et-kōl-piš ’e^yhem...wənōtan ’otōm ’al-ro ’š haššō ’y^r* “Aaron shall lay his two hands on the head of the living goat and shall confess over it all the iniquities and wickedness of the children of Israel...putting them on the head of the goat”; Numbers 27:18, 20: *qah-ləkō ’et-yəho^wšū^a ’bin-nu^wn...wəṣmaktō ’et-yōdōkō ’ōlō^w...wənōtattō^h meho^wdəkō ’ōlō^w* “Take Joshua the son of Nun...lay your hand on him...and put some of your power on him”; Deuteronomy 34:9: *wi^yho^wšū^a ’bin-nu^wn mōle ’ru^waḥ ḥōkmō^h kī^y-sōmak mōšē^h ’et-yōdō^w ’ōlō^w* “Joshua the son of Nun was filled with the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him.” For recent interpretations of hand placement that include the idea of effecting a metaphysical transfer, see Stephen Finlan, *The Background and Contents of Paul’s Cultic Atonement Metaphors* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 86-93; Clayton David Robinson, *The Laying On of Hands, with Special Reference to the Reception of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament* (Fuller Theological Seminary dissertation, 2008).

¹⁵² BDB, 304-5.

¹⁵³ Cf. David Calabro, “‘When You Spread Your Palms, I Will Hide My Eyes’: The Symbolism of Body Gestures in Isaiah,” *Studia Antiqua* 9 (2011): 23-27. Pedersen cites a historical example from the early days of Islam, in which example believers from Mecca made the people of Medina their surrogate brothers through clasping of hands: see Pedersen, *Eid*, 24.

Falk's category of "affirmation" answers to the performative function of the Confronted Figure Handclasp. Textual sources align the gesture with the sealing of a covenant relationship between God and his human servant (see section 3.4.1). An important aspect of this interpretation is a paradigmatic link with the non-contact gesture of raising the hand in oath. As Falk sees it, the raising of the hand is an emancipated variant of the handclasp.¹⁵⁴ This is important both from an empirical standpoint (helping to explain the contextual association of both gestures with the idea of oath-taking or covenant-making) and from a hermeneutical standpoint (giving insight into the dynamics of the two gestures, the handclasp being a more privileged and intimate form on the same continuum as the lifted hand).

Nibley's interpretation of the handclasp as a token for passage draws from a tradition of scholarship on the classical world, including important studies by Davies and Compton.¹⁵⁵ As these studies show, the interpretation has abundant support in classical Greek and Roman sources, but it is harder to substantiate for the Northwest Semitic world. One text that could be cited is Isaiah 45:1: *ko^h - 'omar YHWH limšī^yho^w lako^wreš^š 'ašer-heḥ^ēzaqtī^y bī^ymi^yno^w...lipto^aḥ ləpənə^yw dələṭayim u^wšə^ʿarī^m lo^ʿ yissəgeru^w* "Thus says Yahweh to his anointed one, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have grasped...to open the doors before him, the gates not being closed." The gesture here is associated with access; Yahweh's handclasp, it seems, somehow imparts to the servant the ability to enter through doors unhindered. One could perhaps understand the divine handclasp as imparting knowledge that enables the servant to pass through the doors—that is, the servant is shown how to perform the handclasp that will be required for passage. However, we search in

¹⁵⁴ Falk, "Gestures Expressing Affirmation," 268-69.

¹⁵⁵ Glenys Davies, "The Significance of the Handshake Motif in Classical Funerary Art," *American Journal of Archaeology* 89/4 (1985): 627-40; Todd M. Compton, "The Handclasp and Embrace as Tokens of Recognition," in *By Study and also by Faith: Essays in Honor of Hugh W. Nibley on the Occasion of His Eightieth Birthday*, ed. John M. Lundquist and Stephen D. Ricks (Salt Lake City: Deseret, 1990), 1:611-42. Cf. Hugh Nibley, "Sparsiones," *The Classical Journal* 40 (1945): 538-41. Davies connects the handshake motif with familial "parting, reunion and communion," a "flexible" concept that brings the notions of greeting, unity, kinship, and passage under a single umbrella (Davies, "Significance of the Handshake Motif," 629-30).

vain for a specific indication to this effect in Northwest Semitic sources. A more likely interpretation is that what enables passage through the doors is the servant's privileged covenant relationship with the deity as established by means of the handclasp.¹⁵⁶ Despite this difficulty, Nibley's interpretation opens up an intriguing insight. Like Falk, Nibley links the handclasp with non-contact gestures in a larger paradigm; for Nibley, however, these gestures are not variants of each other but points on a series, performed in succession as one draws closer to sacred space. We have already discussed how this idea works in the case of Palms Out. Psalm 63:2-5, 8-9, cited in that discussion above, refers to Palms Out and the Confronted Figure Handclasp in succession in the context of approaching Yahweh in the temple.

The key elements of Eaton's interpretation of the divine handclasp are the notions of support and transport. Through an oracle, the deity promises to carry the king through the vicissitudes of his reign, this promise being encapsulated in the image of the handclasp.¹⁵⁷ Eaton understands the gesture as a form of leading by the hand, as shown in his reference to a Hittite relief from Yazilikaya, in which a god passes his left arm around king Tudkhaliya IV's shoulder to grasp the latter's right hand.¹⁵⁸ The two figures in the relief face the same direction and are apparently striding together. However, from our discussion in sections 3.4.1 and 4.8.3.5, it appears that the divine handclasp referred to in the biblical passages is not a clasping of adjacent hands to lead by the hand, but rather a clasping of right hands between confronted figures. The notion of transport is thus highly suspect. Nevertheless, this interpretation calls attention to a

¹⁵⁶ Cf. Joseph Blenkinsopp, *The Anchor Bible: Isaiah 40-55* (New York: Doubleday, 2002), 249. Here Blenkinsopp refers to the motif of the deity grasping the ruler's hand, which he describes as part of the "Babylonian *Hofstil*, the protocol and ceremonial of the Babylonian court." With his installation as ruler, the addressee of the handclasp is granted privileges of access.

¹⁵⁷ It is not really clear whether Eaton understands the divine handclasp as something that is physically enacted during the coronation ceremony (such as by proxy through a priest) or whether the gesture is purely a figure of speech in a verbally transmitted oracle. See Eaton, *Festal Drama*, 31, 48, 55-56.

¹⁵⁸ Eaton, *Kingship*, 144; cf. Keel, *Symbolism*, 258-59; ANEP, no. 541.

prominent aspect of the context in the textual examples: the demonstration of favor, rendered explicit by the deity's promise to help the addressee (Isaiah 41:13; cf. Psalm 63:8).

The idea of assumption, as suggested by Dahood, receives its strongest support in Psalm 73:23-24, which Dahood translates as follows: "But I will always be with you. Take hold of my right hand, into your council lead me, and with glory take me to yourself."¹⁵⁹ Translated thus, the passage seems to describe transport as a function of the handclasp. However, the translation may be disputed. Psalm 73 has lexical and thematic links to wisdom literature. In this light, the verb *hinḥōḥ*, which Dahood translates as "lead," may have the sense of "guide (through moral instruction)," suggesting a function of imparting teachings, as to a privileged student. Accordingly, some translators render the colon in question as "You guide me with your counsel" or the like.¹⁶⁰ References to God setting the addressee before him (Psalm 41:13) and "taking" the addressee (Psalm 73:24) are inconclusive on the issue of transport, since they could refer to a limited "pulling in/up" (compatible with a confronted figure format) rather than a more extended "leading along."

Measured by the standard of the form of the gesture, therefore, interpretations 1, 2, and 3 are acceptable. Interpretations 4, 5, and 6 are problematic by this standard. Nevertheless, each of these last three brings out an important aspect of the gesture's function as evident in its literary contexts: the relationship to non-contact gestures as a culmination of ritual approach, the demonstration of special favor, and the imparting of instruction.

As an oath-taking or covenant-making gesture that is executed with one hand extended forward, the Confronted Figure Handclasp aligns with Palm Out, contrasting with the latter in the

¹⁵⁹ Dahood, *Psalms II*, 187; cf. *ibid.*, 194-95.

¹⁶⁰ G. Heinrich Ewald, *Commentary on the Psalms*, vol. 2 (London: Williams and Norgate, 1881), 129, 132; John H. Eaton, *The Psalms: A Historical and Spiritual Commentary with an Introduction and New Translation* (London: T&T Clark International, 2003), 265.

feature of contact vs. non-contact.¹⁶¹ This corresponds to the fact that in many passages using the phrase *heḥēzīʿq* (*yəmiʿn/biʿmiʿn*) *T*, the context suggests that part of the gesture’s role is connected with the affirmation of kinship. In Isaiah 41:14, Yahweh says to his servant, whose hand he has grasped, that he is the servant’s *goʿel* “kinsman redeemer.” In Isaiah 45:4, Yahweh states that he has given the Target of the gesture in verse 1 (king Cyrus of Persia) a name, which is suggestive of assuming a parental relationship toward the Target.¹⁶² We can also compare the handclasp in Jeremiah 31:32 with the lifting of the hand in Ezekiel 20:6. The immediate contexts of the two gesture phrases are practically identical:

Jeremiah 31:32	in the day that I grasped their hand (<i>heḥēzīʿqiʿ bəyḥdōm</i>) to bring them out of the land of Egypt
Ezekiel 20:6	in that day I lifted up my hand to them (<i>nōśōʿtiʿ yōdiʿ ləhem</i>) to bring them out of the land of Egypt

The one difference in context that may correspond to the choice of one gesture instead of the other is the mention of a kin relationship in Jeremiah 31:32: “which covenant of mine they broke, though I had become their husband, says Yahweh.”¹⁶³ It therefore seems that the Confronted Figure Handclasp, unlike Palm Out, performatively asserts that the addressee is a kinsman of the agent.

¹⁶¹ It is interesting to compare the American greeting gestures of “waving” (often realized as a lifted hand without waving) and shaking hands. However, the Northwest Semitic gestures, as they are interpreted here, have more to do with covenant-making and less to do with greeting. This contrasts with the handclasp in classical Greek and Roman iconography, which has a more plausible connection with greeting and leave-taking (Davies, “Significance of the Handshake Motif,” 627-40.)

¹⁶² Cf. the renaming of the Judahite kings Eliakim (Jehoiakim) and Mattaniah (Zedekiah) by conquering rulers in 2 Kings 23:24; 24:17. The new names in these instances may be marks of the surrogate father-child relationship that vassalage entails. See Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961), 108.

¹⁶³ David Calabro, “‘When You Spread Your Palms, I Will Hide My Eyes’: The Symbolism of Body Gestures in Isaiah,” *Studia Antiqua* 9 (2011): 23-27.

The form of the Confronted Figure Handclasp is suited to its functionality in forming a privileged kin-like relationship. It physically unites the two parties and forms a face-to-face interaction scenario, opening rather than interrupting the multisensory indexical channel (breath, unobstructed sight, tactile experience, body warmth) between the two parties. Paradigmatically, the Confronted Figure Handclasp aligns with family interactions involving touch, such as mother-child nursing, parent-child holding, and sexual intercourse.¹⁶⁴ This contrasts with Palm Out, which aligns with interactions in the public sphere that take place across an interaction space. The Confronted Figure Handclasp also forms a clear difference between the addressee and any observers (including those “observing” the ritual via a text or art object). For the latter, the gesture is still only a visual form, as Palm Out is for both the addressee and the observers. Thus the handclasp enacts a privileged status for the addressee over against other participants.

All but one of the iconographic examples of the Confronted Figure Handclasp are on seals: two cylinder seals, eighteen Hyksos scarabs, and at least one Iron Age stamp seal. The performative functionality of the gesture as it interacts with the use of these media may be similar to Palm Out. The rolling or stamping of the seal on a document could coincide with entering into an agreement, for which agreement the handclasp would be appropriate.¹⁶⁵ However, the possible ways in which the Confronted Figure Handclasp interacts with the artistic medium are different from Palm Out in that the handclasp creates a closed interaction structure between the agent and a single addressee. Thus, whereas a figure in Palm Out may be understood

¹⁶⁴ The embrace, another gesture involving physical contact, is performed in the Hebrew Bible only among kin and between sexual partners; see Calabro, “When You Spread Your Palms,” 29n31. Embracing and mother-child nursing are employed in Egyptian sources to perform kinship relations, as we argue the handclasp does in Northwest Semitic sources; see Moret, *Caractère religieux*, 80-81, 94, 100, 101, 160-61; *ANEP*, no. 422; Richard H. Wilkinson, *Reading Egyptian Art: A Hieroglyphic Guide to Ancient Egyptian Painting and Sculpture* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1992), 32-33; Hugh Nibley, *The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri: An Egyptian Endowment*, second edition (Salt Lake City: Deseret, 2005), 427-36.

¹⁶⁵ The authenticating use of the seal would be comparable to an assertion, in modern Western culture, that a particular deal was “sealed with a handshake,” indicating the fixed nature of its terms as well as the pledged reliability of the parties involved.

as directing the gesture to participants outside the scene represented on the seal, including participants in the interaction in which the seal is used, this would be impossible for the Confronted Figure Handclasp. Rather than a function in direct relation to a sealed transaction, the function may be to put on display the seal-bearer's auspicious interaction with the deity. This may reinforce the seal-bearer's authority to officiate in transactions; it may also serve the purpose of a charm, invoking the deity's acceptance of the seal-bearer.

5.6. General Conclusions

In the foregoing chapters, we laid the groundwork for a comprehensive analysis of four Northwest Semitic ritual gestures: Fist Up, Palm Out, Palms Out, and the Confronted Figure Handclasp. The comprehensive analysis, which is the topic of this chapter, yields new understandings of these gestures' ritual functions. These four gestures, the contexts in which they are attested, and their ritual functions as we have described them are summarized in table 33. The second column in this table includes references to the "contextual types" or type-scene-like semiotic centers of ritual behavior that were used to sort out gesture phrases in chapters 2-3 and to characterize iconographic gestures in chapter 4. These "contextual types" are comparable to John L. Austin's category of the "illocutionary" values of utterances—that is, the nameable speech act performed by means of an utterance¹⁶⁶—except that we understand the labels used in this column to be attached more to the total ritual sequences than to the utterances (note that Fist Up does not appear to have been accompanied by an utterance). In similar fashion, the third column in the table is comparable to Austin's category of "perlocutionary" effects—that is, the

¹⁶⁶ John L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1975), 98-101.

real-world effects that are brought about by means of the utterance and/or the speech act¹⁶⁷—
except that the effects in this column arise from the gesture itself and not from an utterance nor
from the context as a whole.

Table 33. Functions of Northwest Semitic Ritual Hand Gestures

Gesture name	Contextual type(s)	Effect(s) on context
Fist Up	destruction or exertion of supernatural power	creating warrior-foe relationship invoking primordial battle of storm god against chaos projecting annihilation onto target
Palm Out	oath (or divine decree) pledge of allegiance presentation of offering surrender	performative marker creating bifurcated interaction structure
Palms Out	prayer	“spreading out” or magnifying target indexing lowliness and displacement of agent
Confronted Figure Handclasp	covenant	creating privileged kin-like relationship

As argued in this chapter through close analysis of the individual gestures, the effects given in the third column of the table above are fundamental ritual functions by which one semiotic center, the individual gesture, can be employed to structure the interactional environment toward another semiotic center, the contextual type.

This study reveals five insights that can inform the wider field of the anthropological study of ritual. The first insight relates to the methodology of reconstructing ancient ritual practices. An emic analysis of context, arising from the categories indicated in textual and iconographic artifacts, can be a tool for systematic synthesis of linguistic and iconographic data.

¹⁶⁷ Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, 101-3.

This allows us, in turn, to approach as closely as possible the reality of the ancient practices. For example, in chapter 2, we presented a list of semantic roles based on analysis of the constituents of Northwest Semitic gesture phrases. These semantic roles figured in the grouping of gesture phrases according to contextual type in chapters 2 and 3. The same semantic roles, extrapolated to the visual sphere, served as nodal points for the synthesis of linguistic and iconographic data in chapter 4. We were able to establish a relatively reliable reconstruction of what the gestures looked like and how they functioned in context. We assume that a similar procedure of systematic synthesis based on emic categories could be applied to refine our understanding of ritual practices in other ancient societies.

A second insight has to do with the interconnectivity of ritual gestures in a culture's nonverbal repertoire. It is profitable to view Northwest Semitic ritual gestures in relation to each other as parts of a coherent system. For example, there is a meaningful contrast between the raising of one hand in oath or covenant and the clasping of hands in the same context. The former gesture is used for political alliances and public legal acts, while the latter marks the affirmation or formation of a surrogate kinship bond between the participants, suggesting that the physical distance between participants is symbolically linked to the social category of public vs. kinship relations. The use of two hands in Palms Out also contrasts with the one-handed Palm Out gesture, as the use of two hands indexes maximal displacement and thus the lower status of the agent.

The third insight relates to the strategic nature of Northwest Semitic ritual gestures. These can be viewed in their fundamental function as dynamic forms of work, shaping the interaction structure between participants. This opens up a wider understanding of Northwest Semitic ritual, showing how gestures could be deployed strategically to shape the ritual context and to

manipulate the status of participants. One offering supplication before Yahweh, for example, could lower his/her own status within the interaction by performing the Palms Out gesture with rapid movements. Covenant-making interactions could likewise be modulated through the choice of the Palm Out gesture or the handclasp. This understanding may be new to scholars who are accustomed to focusing on the rigid, prescribed aspects of religious ritual.¹⁶⁸ Ancient Near Eastern cults had their rigid and prescribed aspects, to be sure. However, the creative mobilization of gestures as “in-effect ritual centers of semiosis” to structure the religious event¹⁶⁹ accords with some features of Near Eastern cultic practice, including spontaneous prayers and the prominent role of divination. With these features, divine-human interaction was a basically flexible enterprise with results that could range from the auspicious to the disastrous.¹⁷⁰ Ritual gestures were means by which one could attempt to control these outcomes.

The fourth insight is that this fundamental functioning of ritual gestures, in which gestures dynamically structure the ritual environment, forms a foundation on which ancient and modern interpreters build figurations based on iconic, origin-focused relationships. The gestures serve as sites for the enacting of ritualization as defined by Bell, namely the “production of expedient schemes that structure an environment in such a way that the environment appears to

¹⁶⁸ As one among many examples of such focus, see Roy Rappaport, “The Obvious Aspects of Ritual,” in *Ecology, Meaning, and Religion* (Richmond, California: North Atlantic Books, 1979), 175-76. Cf. Ronald Grimes, “Defining Nascent Ritual,” in *Beginnings in Ritual Studies* (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1995), 60-61: “The usual scholarly view is that ritual is: (1) repeated (for instance, every Sabbath); (2) sacred (related to the holy, of utmost significance); (3) formalized (consisting of prescribed, unchanging movements such as bowing or kneeling); (4) traditional (not being done for the first time, claiming an ancient history or authorized by myth); and (5) intentional (nonrandom actions, done with awareness of some reason or meaning)...The danger of defining ritual solely in terms of its more mature or sacred instances, such as the Passover celebration or the Mass, is that we too easily assume that ritual is there, an unchanging given, and that ‘ritual creativity’ is an oxymoron.”

¹⁶⁹ Cf. Michael Silverstein, “‘Cultural’ Concepts and the Language-Culture Nexus,” *Current Anthropology* 45 (2004): 623.

¹⁷⁰ See David Wright, *Ritual in Narrative: The Dynamics of Feasting, Mourning, and Retaliation Rites in the Ugaritic Tale of Aqhat* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2001), whole volume. Specifically regarding the use of gestures as a potentially auspicious omen, although in a Mesopotamian context, see Frechette, *Mesopotamian Ritual-Prayers*, 87 passim.

be the source of the schemes and their values.”¹⁷¹ The dynamic structuring of the environment is thus the practical means by which gestures “figure forth” symbolic meanings: ritual gestures delineate contiguities which are the basis for iconic, diagrammatic interpretation.¹⁷² Reflexively, the diagrammatically structured environment may be perceived (both in the gesture’s living context and by modern interpreters reconstructing that context) as a force motivating the use of the gesture. We have seen that, in many cases, modern interpreters have had recourse to representationalistic etiologies in which the meaning of a ritual gesture, formulated as an abstract concept (like “blessing” or “adoration”), is derived from a biologically or socially motivated response. The original motivated action is thus taken as both the iconic basis of the ritual gesture and the key to its supposed symbolism. For example, in the seventh interpretation of Palms Out discussed above, the gesture is derived from a display of the hands empty of weapons, which yields the abstract concept of “submission” as the symbolic essence of the gesture’s meaning. These etiological interpretations are ad hoc in the sense that they are based on a limited set of contexts for a given gesture; they also do not trouble themselves with the full range of interpretive possibilities, which would render visible the structure-forming trends that characterize the gesture’s functionality as a form of ritual practice. These modern etiologies are thus examples of the reanalysis of the gesture’s environment as a source of the gesture and its meaning, the process which Bell describes for ritual practice in general. Such interpretive interplay between the two ritual semiotic centers of gesture and context also occurred in the ancient culture, as is evident, for example, in the parallel structuring of Isaiah 1:15, in which “spreading out the palms” is aligned with “praying” (implying that the gesture and prayer are considered to be mutually explicatory on some level) and with the hands being full of blood

¹⁷¹ Bell, *Ritual Theory*, 140.

¹⁷² Choksy, “In Reverence for Deities,” 8; Silverstein, “Cultural Concepts,” 626.

(perhaps implying an interpretation of the gesture as a display of purity). The ancient semioses of these gestures, however, are less accessible to us due to the paucity of data and the inherent difficulties of approaching the ancient culture without living informants.

Finally, there is a close connection between the ritual functions of gestures and those of the artistic media by which the visual representations of these gestures are transmitted. The artistic media, together with the use of the gestures by real people in ritual contexts, are mutually complementary means by which deities could be understood as ordering the world through concentric circles of authority, including the king, his officials, and the populace who participate in the production and reception of the gesture tokens. We consider a comparison of ritual gestures to craftsmen's tools (see section 5.1) to be particularly apt, since the work of the people who produced the artifacts analyzed herein—a work carried out, for the most part, under official sponsorship—complements the gestures represented on these artifacts as means of performing an ordered environment according to divine design. The physical use of the object is also part of this ordering process. Stamp seals, for example, often bear an image of a deity or king in the performative Palm Out gesture. The performative stamping of the seal on a document simultaneously transmits the performative gesture into the context of the document as well as into the ritual context for which the document is created, thus extending the “reach” of the deity's or king's authority to every transaction in which the seal is used.



Seal of Miksap.
Drawn by the author after Avigad, *Corpus*, 412.

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