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## **The Divine Handclasp in the Hebrew Bible and in Near Eastern Iconography**

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# THE DIVINE HANDCLASP IN THE HEBREW BIBLE AND IN NEAR EASTERN ICONOGRAPHY

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David Calabro

**Abstract:** *David Calabro explores what he describes as the “divine handclasp” in the Hebrew Bible. The term refers to a handclasp between God and his human servant that had a place in ancient Israelite temple worship. Calabro indicates it was a ritual gesture that was part of temple rite performance with a priest acting as proxy for God in close interaction with mankind. While other scholars have suggested the gesture was indicative of deity transporting mankind to “glory,” Calabro’s research proposes the clasping of right hands while facing one another was ritually indicative of God granting access to His chosen rather than transporting him.*

[**Editor’s Note:** Part of our book chapter reprint series, this article is reprinted here as a service to the LDS community. Original pagination and page numbers have necessarily changed, otherwise the reprint has the same content as the original.]

See David Calabro, “The Divine Handclasp in the Hebrew Bible and in Near Eastern Iconography,” in *Temple Insights: Proceedings of the Interpreter Matthew B. Brown Memorial Conference, “The Temple on Mount Zion,” 22 September 2012*, ed. William J. Hamblin and David Rolph Seely (Orem, UT: The Interpreter Foundation; Salt Lake City: Eborn Books, 2014), 25–66. Further information at <https://interpreterfoundation.org/books/temple-insights/>.]

The topic of this paper is the form and meaning of a gesture mentioned in the Hebrew Bible: a handclasp exchanged between God and his human servant, a gesture I refer to as the “divine handclasp.”<sup>1</sup> Taken together with comparative evidence, the contexts in which this gesture

occurs suggest that it had a place in ancient Israelite temple worship, perhaps as a ritual gesture performed with the help of a priest who stood as proxy for God.<sup>2</sup> Whether or not a concrete gesture is described, biblical references to the divine handclasp are profound expressions of close interaction with Deity, a concept that was rooted in the rites of the temple.

The divine handclasp has been interpreted in various ways. Mitchell Dahood considers it a means of reception into the divine council and ultimately of assumption into eternal life.<sup>3</sup> John Eaton posits that it refers figuratively to God's favor and aid rendered to the king during his reign.<sup>4</sup> Both of these ideas are picked up by Othmar Keel, who further suggests that the divine handclasp was part of an ancient Israelite coronation ceremony like those of Egypt and Mesopotamia.<sup>5</sup> Implicit in many of the suggestions on the meaning of this gesture are assumptions about the gesture's form, such as the direction in which the participants face and whether the right or left hands are used. For example, in their discussions of the divine handclasp, both Eaton and Keel refer to a Hittite relief showing a god leading a king by the hand.<sup>6</sup> In this relief, the god's left hand grasps the king's right, and the king faces the same direction as the god (see illustration and discussion below). Accordingly, the interpretations of Eaton and Keel presuppose that biblical references to God grasping the king's hand refer to leading by the hand.

My purpose in this paper is to investigate what we can responsibly say about this gesture's form and meaning based on the biblical texts in which it is mentioned and on a comparison of these texts with Near Eastern iconography. I will begin by reviewing the eleven occurrences of this gesture in the Hebrew Bible and pointing out clues to the form of the gesture in these passages; I will then review the evidence from iconography. After we have established the form of the gesture to the extent possible, I will conclude with some observations about what this implies for the meaning of the gesture.

### Clues to the Gesture's Form from Textual Sources

The divine handclasp is mentioned twice in the Psalms using the Hebrew verb *'hz*, meaning "grasp."<sup>7</sup>

Psalm 73:23-24    I am with you always; **you have grasped my right hand**  
                           [*'hzt byd-ymyny*]. You guide me with your counsel and  
                           will afterwards receive me to glory.<sup>8</sup>

Psalm 139:9-10 I will ascend with the wings of dawn, I will dwell at the distant horizon of the sea. / Even there your hand will guide me, **your right hand will grasp me** [*wi'hzny ymynk*].

The fact that the gesture in both of these passages is parallel to a verb of motion (*hnhh* — “lead, guide, conduct”) has led most interpreters to assume that the gesture is one of leading by the hand. This is especially clear in Dahood’s translation of Psalm 73:24: “Into your council lead me, and with glory take me to yourself.”<sup>9</sup> However, as will be shown below, comparison with other passages argues against this interpretation and causes us to reevaluate the meaning in these Psalms passages. Both Psalm 73 and Psalm 139 happen to have thematic and linguistic connections to wisdom literature,<sup>10</sup> and from this perspective, one might suggest that rather than referring to physical motion, *hnhh* has the sense of “instruct,” as it sometimes does in Proverbs.<sup>11</sup> The parallelism would then call attention not to the gesture’s function of transporting the Psalmist, but to its function as a means of imparting knowledge. The symbolism of God’s hand as an agent of instruction can be found elsewhere in the Psalms and in other parts of the Hebrew Bible (see Psalm 45:5; Job 27:11; Isaiah 8:11; see also Psalms 18:34; 144:1).

As Matt Brown has noticed, if we conflate the gestures in Psalm 73 and Psalm 139 (as the contextual similarity between the two verses encourages us to do), we see that both God and the Psalmist use their right hands.<sup>12</sup> This would suggest that the participants in the gesture are facing each other, as we do when we shake hands. In contrast, leading by the hand, both in ancient iconography and in usual practice today, is similar to walking side-by-side, with one participant grasping the adjacent hand of the other.

We turn now to four passages in the latter part of Isaiah that describe the divine handclasp using the verb *hḥzyq*, meaning “grasp.”

- Isaiah 41:9 I **who have grasped you** [*hḥzqtyk*] from the ends of the earth and have called you from its corners, and have said to you, “You are my servant. I have chosen you and have not forsaken you.”
- Isaiah 41:13 For I am Yahweh your God, **he who grasps your right hand** [*mḥzyq ymynk*], who says to you, “Do not fear, I will help you.”
- Isaiah 42:6 I am Yahweh. I have called you in righteousness, **and I will grasp your hand** [*w'hzq bydk*], watch over you, and make you a covenant of the people, a light to the nations.

Isaiah 45:1      Thus says Yahweh to his anointed one, to Cyrus, whose **right hand I have grasped** [*hhzqty bymynw*] to subdue nations before him, ungirding kings, and to open the doors before him, the gates not being closed.

The context in these passages has to do with entering into a covenant, which includes an oath made by Deity. In Isaiah 45:1, the content of the oath is mentioned in connection with the gesture. The text might more clearly be translated, “whose right hand I have grasped (in oath, swearing) to subdue nations before him.” Again, this tends to invoke a handclasp between parties facing each other, such as when we clasp hands to strike a bargain.

A fifth example belonging to the prophetic genre is found in Jeremiah 31:31–32.

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

This passage, like those from Psalms 73 and 139 above, has often been misinterpreted as referring to leading by the hand. However, the context here in Jeremiah 31:31–32 refers to a covenant, and the clause in question may be rendered as “I grasped their hand (in oath, swearing) to bring them out of the land of Egypt,” like the clause “whose right hand I have grasped (in oath, swearing) to subdue nations before him” in Isaiah 45:1:

Jeremiah 31:32:

**I grasped their hand**

(in oath, swearing)

to bring them out of the land of Egypt

Isaiah 45:1:

**whose right hand I have grasped**

(in oath, swearing)

to subdue nations before him

Further, the language here in Jeremiah 31:32 is very similar to passages that describe raising the hand to make an oath, such as Ezekiel 20:6: “in that day I lifted up my hand to them to bring them out of the land of Egypt.” The two passages can be compared almost phrase for phrase, as follows:

Jeremiah 31:32:	Ezekiel 20:6:
in the day that	in that day
<b>I grasped their hand</b>	<b>I lifted up my hand to them</b>
to bring them	to bring them
out of the land of Egypt	out of the land of Egypt

As this comparison suggests, the handclasp in Jeremiah 31:31–32, like the lifting of the hand in Ezekiel 20:6, is most likely an oath-taking gesture exchanged between two parties who face each other rather than a form of leading by the hand.

Finally, the verb *tmk*, meaning “hold,” is used both in the Psalms and in Isaiah to describe the divine handclasp:

- Psalm 41:13 As for me in my integrity, **you have held me** [*tmkt by*]; you have set me before you forever!
- Psalm 63:9 My soul clung to you, **your right hand held me** [*by tmkh ymynk*].
- Isaiah 41:10 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** [*tmktyk bymyn šdqy*].
- Isaiah 42:1 Behold, as for my servant **whom I hold** [*’tmk-bw*], my chosen (in whom) my soul delights, I have put my spirit upon him, he will bring judgment to the nations.

Another example of the verb *tmk* being used to describe a handclasp may be found in an Aramaic text written in Demotic script, Papyrus Amherst 63. However, this example is doubtful due to the fragmentary state of this portion of the text. A few extant words in this portion seem to have to do with blessing (such as the words *peace* and *cup*). As for the phrase describing the gesture itself, the only really legible word is *ymynk*, meaning “your right hand”; some (but not all) scholars who have studied this text restore the verb *’tmk*, meaning “I will hold,” before it.<sup>13</sup>

Other verbs and phrases have also been linked with the three listed above as means of expressing the divine handclasp. These include *’sp*, meaning “gather” or “take up” (see Psalm 27:10);<sup>14</sup> *lqh*, meaning “take” or “receive” (see Psalms 49:15; 73:24);<sup>15</sup> *nkwn yd ’m*, meaning “of the hand, be firm or fixed with” (see Psalm 89:20–21);<sup>16</sup> *hzqt yd*, meaning “strength of hand” or perhaps “grasping the hand” (Isaiah 8:11);<sup>17</sup> and *ntn ... yd*, meaning “give ... a ‘hand’” (Isaiah 56:5).<sup>18</sup> Compared to the three types listed above—which use the verbs *’hz*, *hḥzyq*, and *tmk*—the connection

to a handclasp gesture for these other phrases is less certain, and the number of proposed examples in each case is small. For these reasons, I exclude them from the present study.

In my judgment, the eleven passages quoted above—in which the verbs *ʾhz*, *hḥzyq*, and *tmk* are used—all describe one gesture. By examining these passages, one sees a web of contextual similarities that would make it difficult to separate them into different gestures. For example, both Psalm 139:9–10 and Isaiah 41:9 emphasize the remoteness of the location in which God grasps his mortal servant’s hand. Both Psalm 73:23–24 and Psalm 41:13 mention being with God always. Further, many of these passages convey the general sense of the gesture’s mortal recipient being chosen and having a special relationship with the Deity. Aside from these general contextual similarities, one notes that the verb *ʾhz* is used to describe a handclasp only in the Psalms, the verb *hḥzyq* is used in this way only in Isaiah and Jeremiah, and *tmk* is used in both the Psalms and the Prophets. Given this distribution, one is tempted to consider *ʾhz* and *hḥzyq* to be equivalent verbs for the same gesture, each verb being limited to a particular genre.

Once again, as Matt Brown noted, when we combine the examples with *hḥzyq* and *tmk* in Isaiah 41, we can see that both the right hand of God and the right hand of His chosen are mentioned.<sup>19</sup> This, together with the oath-taking function that is present in some of the examples, suggests that both parties are facing each other and not walking side-by-side or one after the other.

### **Divine Handclasps in Near Eastern Iconography**

Many kinds of handclasps are found in Near Eastern iconography. In the Mesopotamian world, many cylinder seals feature what is known as a “presentation scene,” in which a deity is shown leading a worshipper or supplicant by the hand into the presence of another deity (see Figure 1).<sup>20</sup>



Figure 1. Akkadian cylinder seal showing a presentation scene, ca. 2300 BC. An interceding deity leads a supplicant by the hand into the presence of the sun god Shamash; the supplicant holds a caprid to present as an offering. Redrawn by the author from Henri Frankfort, *Cylinder Seals: A Documentary Essay on the Art and Religion of the Ancient Near East* (London: Macmillan, 1939), pl. 18e.

A similar kind of scene is found in Egyptian art of the New Kingdom, featured on the walls of royal tombs, in temple reliefs, and in vignettes from Spells 117 and 125 of the Book of the Dead. In these Egyptian examples, the king or deceased person is inducted by one or more deities into the presence of another deity (see Figures 2–3). Together with these induction scenes in Egyptian art, we find scenes in which the god who stands in front of the king and holds his hand faces him instead of leading him by the hand. Variations of these Egyptian scenes are very commonly found on scarab seals from the Levant during the same time period. Othmar Keel compares the presentation scene in Mesopotamian art and the induction scene in Egyptian art to biblical passages that mention the divine handclasp, but ultimately he rejects this connection because it is hard to reconcile with the Bible's monotheistic viewpoint.<sup>21</sup> In addition, the kind of handclasp shown in the presentation and induction scenes does not seem to fit with the biblical descriptions, in which the right hands of both parties are used.

We have already mentioned the Hittite relief of Tudkhaliya IV from Yazilikaya (see Figure 4). This seems to be the preferred comparandum to the biblical divine handclasp for those who have studied this gesture most closely, namely Eaton and Keel. However, once again, note that the god uses his left hand, not his right, to grasp the king's right hand. This does not match the biblical descriptions, in which it is clearly the god's right hand that is used. Further, we have shown that the idea of leading by the hand does not seem to be a major aspect of the biblical divine handclasp.



Figure 2. Scene from the tomb of Nefertari, Thebes, ca. 1200 BC. The god Horus, son of Isis, leads the queen Nefertari by the hand into the presence of the deities Re-Horakhty and Hathor. Redrawn by the author from Zahi Hawass, *The Royal Tombs of Egypt* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2006), 256.

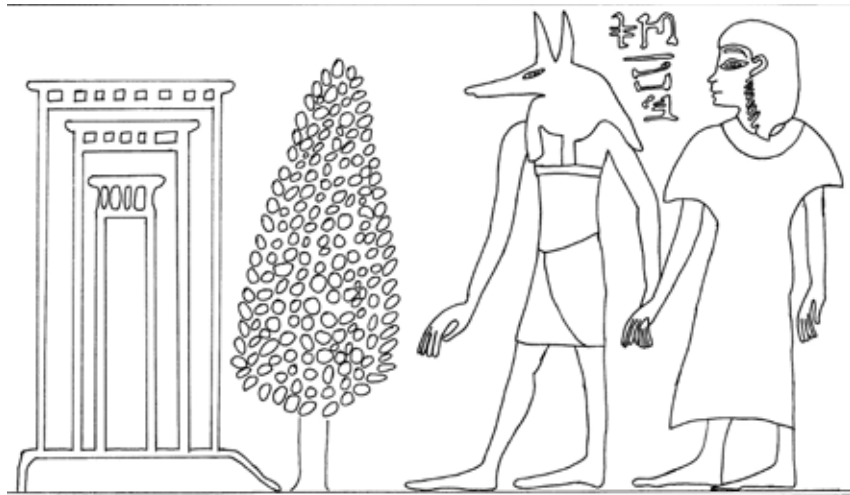


Figure 3. Vignette from the Book of the Dead, Spell 117. The god Anubis leads the deceased person by the hand toward a false door that leads to the presence of Osiris. From the papyrus of Nakht (BM 10471). Redrawn by the author from Raymond O. Faulkner and Carol Andrews, *The Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), 112.



Figure 4. Relief of Tudkhaliya IV from Yazilikaya, ca. 1250 BC. Redrawn by the author from James B. Pritchard, *The Ancient Near East in Pictures Relating to the Old Testament* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1954), 182.

Those who have sought iconographic parallels for the biblical divine handclasp have generally turned to the art of Israel's neighbors in Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Anatolia. This is certainly better than, say, a comparison with Chinese or Greek art, yet it is not fully satisfactory either, since there are significant cultural and religious differences between Israel and her Near Eastern neighbors. Therefore, we have good reason to ask if there are any depictions of handclasps that are closer to the Israelite context. In fact, there are. A couple of cylinder seals from the Middle Bronze Age Levant<sup>22</sup> and assorted scarab seals from the same period<sup>23</sup> show a handclasp exchanged between a divine personage and a mortal (see Figure 5). In addition, a Phoenician ivory fan handle from the Iron Age<sup>24</sup> shows a handclasp exchanged between a divine personage and a mortal (see Figure 6).

Interestingly enough, the parties of the gesture in all these instances are facing each other. I am not aware of any Levantine art showing the motif of leading by the hand other than the New Kingdom scarabs mentioned earlier, which are more closely tied to Egyptian artistic conventions.



Figure 5. Hyksos scarab seal showing a figure seated on an animal-legged throne, clasp hands with a standing figure. Redrawn by the author from Fiona V. Richards, *Scarab Seals from a Middle to Late Bronze Age Tomb at Pella in Jordan* (Fribourg: University Press, 1992), pl. 3.



Figure 6. Phoenician ivory fan handle. A figure on the right (possibly a deity or a priest) clasps hands with a man (possibly Abdibaal, the owner of the fan, whose name is given in the inscription at the bottom) across what appears to be a curtain or veil. On the left is an attendant. The incense altar at the far right indicates that the scene takes place at the temple. Redrawn by the author from 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), 76.

One may, of course, object that the confronted figures in these Levantine examples are clasping adjacent hands, the left hand of the figure on the left and the right hand of the figure on the right. Thus, on the surface, this does not seem to fit precisely with the biblical descriptions.

However, it is quite likely that Levantine iconography depicts the figures in this way for compositional reasons, so that each figure is presented to maximum advantage.<sup>25</sup> Similar rearrangement of figures frequently occurs in Egyptian art as well, so it is often difficult to tell which hand would have been used in a given ritual.<sup>26</sup> In this case, we can guess that this kind of rearrangement is at work, since there is a discrepancy between the artistic motif and how people actually clasp hands when they face each other in ritual contexts.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, we may posit that what is shown for compositional reasons as a clasping of adjacent hands would have transpired in real life as a clasping of right hands. This small assortment of Levantine pieces thus provides a suitable parallel for the biblical descriptions of the divine handclasp.

### **Implications for the Meaning of the Gesture**

In conclusion, let us see what our findings imply about the meaning of the divine handclasp in the biblical world. In the beginning, I mentioned that Eaton and Keel assume that this gesture was a form of leading by the hand. However, our study shows that what we have here is quite different. Since the parties of the gesture would likely face each other, transport could not have been an integral aspect of the gesture, except in the limited sense of one party pulling the other inward. The Psalmist's statement that God will "receive [him] to glory" in Psalm 73:23–24 can be understood in this latter sense. As we have seen, the idea of "guiding" in connection with this gesture in the Psalms may be interpreted in the sense of giving instruction. In Isaiah 45:1, it is likely a matter of God granting access to His chosen rather than transporting him.

The form of the gesture, with both parties facing each other and clasping right hands, is compatible with the idea that the divine handclasp was performative in nature; in other words, doing the gesture was like saying, "I hereby ..." or "I now officially...." It was therefore similar to raising the hand with the palm forward, another gesture that is performed by deities in the Hebrew Bible and in Levantine art. Both the divine handclasp and the raising of the hand sometimes accompany oaths, as in Isaiah 45:1 and Jeremiah 31:31–32. However, the handclasp was different from raising the hand in that the former apparently imparted a special status to the recipient, a status like that of a privileged servant or close family member, as seen almost universally in the passages I have cited.

As mentioned above, Eaton and Keel have maintained that the divine handclasp was part of a temple coronation ritual. The Phoenician ivory

fan handle, which shows a god or priest reaching across what appears to be a curtain or veil, may suggest this kind of temple context. However, the precise ritual here is quite different from what Eaton and Keel envisioned; it is more in harmony with the concept of Matt Brown, who drew on late antique and medieval depictions of assumption in which God grasps the hand of a mortal as if to pull him in.<sup>28</sup> What I have been able to glean from the Hebrew texts and from Levantine iconography thus confirms what Matt Brown, with his characteristic insight, had already put forward.

### Notes

1. Matt Brown, the honoree of this volume, had an interest in the divine handclasp and wrote an unpublished paper entitled “The Handclasp, the Temple, and the King” (August 2008), which he graciously shared with me shortly before his untimely passing and which is at last published in this volume. I am indebted to Matt for his insights, as will be clear in my discussion. I offer my treatment of this topic as a tribute to Matt, in gratitude for his generosity, the enlightening conversations we shared, and his work in advancing our understanding of the ancient temple and its significance for Latter-day Saints.
2. Shalom M. Paul, “Deutero-Isaiah and Cuneiform Royal Inscriptions,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 88 (1968): 180-86; Brown, “Handclasp,” 2, 3. In general on the handclasp as a ritual gesture, with examples mostly from classical Greek and Roman contexts, see 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; Stephen D. Ricks, “Dexiosis and Dextrarum Iunctio: The Sacred Handclasp in the Classical and Early Christian World,” *The FARMS Review* 18/1 (2006): 431-36.
3. Mitchell Dahood, *The Anchor Bible: Psalms I (1-50)* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1965), xxxvi, 33, 146, 252-53, 301-2; Mitchell Dahood, *The Anchor Bible: Psalms II (51-100)*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974), 85, 100, 194.
4. John H. Eaton, *Kingship and the Psalms*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1986), 143-44; John H. Eaton, *The Psalms: A Historical and*

*Spiritual Commentary with an Introduction and New Translation* (London: T&T Clark International, 2003), 177, 236, 267.

5. Othmar Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World: Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Book of Psalms* (New York: Crossroad, 1985), 198-201, 258-59. Joseph Blenkinsopp likewise asserts that references to the gesture are taken from “the protocol and ceremonial of the Babylonian court,” but he considers this a purely literary phenomenon. See Joseph Blenkinsopp, *The Anchor Bible: Isaiah 40-55* (New York: Doubleday, 2002), 211, 249.
6. Eaton, *Kingship*, 144; Keel, *Symbolism*, 258-59; cf. James B. Pritchard, *The Ancient Near East in Pictures Relating to the Old Testament* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1954), 182, 315 (no. 541).
7. Also relevant here are the Hebrew royal names Ahaziah, Jehoahaz, and the shortened form Ahaz, all of which express the idea that “Yahweh has grasped” the bearer of the name. See Eaton, *Kingship*, 77.
8. All translations from Hebrew herein are my own unless otherwise noted.
9. Mitchell Dahood, *The Anchor Bible: Psalms II (51-100)*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974), 187.
10. John S. Kselman, in *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*.
11. Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs. *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2005), 634-35. It should also be noted that *b’štk* should be translated “with your counsel, advice” and not “into your council” as Dahood translates. The word *šh* is used often in wisdom literature in the sense of “counsel, advice” but does not, as far as I am aware, refer to a body of personages in the sense of “council.”
12. Matt Brown, personal communication, May 2011. By the time Matt communicated with me, we had both reached the same conclusion independently.
13. See 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,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 43/2 (1984): 94, 96; contrast Sven P. Vleeming and Jan W. Wesselius, “Betel the Saviour: Papyrus Amherst 63, col. 7:1-18,” *Ex Oriente Lux* 28 (1983-1984): 116-17.

14. Brown, "Handclasp," 4.
15. Dahood, *Anchor Bible: Psalms I*, xxxvi, 33, 146, 252-53, 301-2; Dahood, *Anchor Bible: Psalms II*, 85, 100, 194.
16. Brown, "Handclasp," 1; cf. the translation "My hand shall hold him fast" in Eaton, *Kingship*, 317.
17. Although most translations render the phrase in question as "with a strong hand" or similarly, the New Jerusalem Bible and the *Tanakh* translation of the Jewish Publication Society translate as "when his hand seized hold of me" or similarly. The latter translation is based on a supposed connection with the idiom *hḥzyq yd* "grasp the hand," discussed above.
18. For the interpretation of Isaiah 56:5 as referring to a handclasp, see Abraham 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. Most others understand this passage as describing the setting up of a stela or memorial. See, for example, D. W. Van Winkle, "The Meaning of YĀD WĀŠĒM in Isaiah LVI 5," *Vetus Testamentum* 47 (1997): 378-85.
19. Matt Brown, personal communication, May 2011.
20. 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; cf. 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.
21. Keel, *Symbolism*, 198-201.
22. Dominique Collon, *The Alalakh Cylinder Seals* (Oxford: B.A.R., 1982), 82; Beatrice Teissier, *Egyptian Iconography on Syro-Palestinian Cylinder Seals of the Middle Bronze Age* (Fribourg: University Press, 1996), 50-51 (no. 9).
23. 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); Raphael Giveon, *Egyptian Scarabs from Western Asia from the Collections of the British Museum* (Fribourg: University Press, 1985), 152-53 (no. 49); Othmar Keel, *Corpus der Stempelsiegel-Amulette*

- aus Palästina-Israel*, Katalog Band I (Fribourg: University Press, 1997), 334-35 (no. 679), 460-61 (no. 1045); Othmar Keel, *Corpus der Stempelsiegel-Amulette aus Palästina-Israel*, Katalog Band III (Fribourg: University Press, 2010), 388-89 (no. 855).
24. 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), 76-77, 277; Oscar White Muscarella, ed., *Ladders to Heaven: Art Treasures from Lands of the Bible* (Toronto, Canada: McClelland and Stewart, 1981), 286, 326-27. Muscarella, in *Ladders to Heaven*, 286, suggests that the design may be a modern forgery, but his only evidence for this is the “crude” nature of the design elements, which may just as well be an argument for the design not being a forgery. He also cites a personal communication from Irene Winter to the effect that “the decoration could fit into a first millennium Phoenician or Punic background” on the basis of parallels from various sites in the Mediterranean.
  25. Groenewegen-Frankfort, *Arrest and Movement*, 7-8.
  26. Cf. Emily Teeter, *The Presentation of Maat: Ritual and Legitimacy in Ancient Egypt* (Chicago: Oriental Institute, 1997), 22.
  27. 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”). An ancient Assyrian relief from Nimrud, which shows a king and his vassal clasping right hands, perhaps illustrates more accurately what the gesture would have looked like. See Max Mallowan, *Nimrud and Its Remains* (London: Collins, 1966), 446-49.
  28. Brown, “Handclasp,” 4; Matt Brown, personal communications.

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