“…He Laid a Hand to the Other’s Property”: The Suspected Wrongdoing in Exodus 22:7, 10

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In a 1962 article, Paul Humbert identified several nuances of the Biblical Hebrew idiom שלח יד, which literally means ‘to lay or extend a hand’. According to Humbert, this idiom has the primary meaning of grabbing forcefully, and typically refers to a physical or hostile act. The idiom appears rarely in the legal sections of the Pentateuch. Two of these attestations occur in the Covenant Code’s law of bailment in Exodus 22:6-14, which includes a number of cases of one person leaving property in another person’s possession for temporary safekeeping. The first two bailment scenarios in the Covenant Code’s law involve the deposit of silver or goods, and a herding arrangement. In both scenarios, something goes awry, and suspicion falls upon the bailee, who watches the owner’s property. An innocent bailee may undergo a cultic procedure to clear himself of a wrongdoing designated by the words שלח יד بمלאכת רעהו: having ‘laid his hand’ on the other’s property. In order to clarify the nature of the bailee’s alleged offense, and help inform an understanding of the scope of the bailee’s rights and duties, and of liability in this law, an accurate interpretation of the words שלח יד is necessary. This afternoon, I will revisit the meaning of שלח יד, questioning whether previous interpretations of the idiom fit in the context of this law. Drawing on contextual, linguistic, and comparative evidence, I will argue that שלח יד bears a legal valence in addition to its usual lay senses, so that the words שלח יד بمלאכת רעהו should be translated, “he behaved negligently toward the other’s property.”
A translation of \( \text{שלח ידו} \) must fit with the legal contexts of both v.7 and v. 10 – with the deposit of goods and animal herding. For this reason, one cannot translate \( \text{שלח ידו} \) simply as “to touch”: The duties of a bailee of goods might never require him to – and indeed, might even forbid him from – touching those goods. However, the bailee of animals’ most basic tasks demand that he physically involve himself in the care of those animals. Right off the bat, then, we can eliminate “touch” as a candidate for translating \( \text{שלח ידו} \).

Translations of verses 7 and 10 typically render \( \tilde{s}ālāh yādō \) as “laid his hands” (or similar), maintaining the hand idiom of the original BH without spelling out what that might mean. ii David Wright’s translation “misappropriated” makes explicit the view of various scholars who preserve the idiom in translation, but describe the crux of the case imagined by v. 7 as whether the bailee himself – and not some third-party thief, as in v. 6 – stole the property. iii This coheres with Humbert’s identification of the primary meaning of \( \text{שלח ידו} \) as grabbing forcefully: the bailee is accused of taking the property with force; that is, he is suspected of fraud in the form of theft.

While an interpretation of \( \text{שלח ידו} \) in v. 7 as relating to theft is semantically and contextually sound, it does not fit with the legal situation of v. 10, which uses the same language. The bailee of v. 10 stands accused of wrongdoing in the case of an animal’s death, capture, or injury. Of these, only capture may be construed as related to theft, or forceful taking. Diachronic analyses resolve this discrepancy by attributing death and injury on the one hand, and capture on the other, to separate stages in the composition of the law. iv While acknowledging textual development of the law as a plausible alternative, this paper follows the lead of Westbrook and others, in considering whether the law as it stands may be explained as internally consistent, such that the language \( \text{שלח ידו} \) coheres with all of the legal situations to which it refers.
A number of scholars have tackled the apparent incompatibility of שלח יד with death and injury in v. 10. Seebass, for example, despite analyzing the pericope diachronically, interprets the idiom more generally (than misappropriation or theft) as doing anything – whether through ineptitude or malice – that brings about harm to the bailed animal. Sprinkle similarly views שלח יד as a broad term, which he translates “trespass,” but interprets as theft in v. 7 and as either negligence (for death or injury) or fraud (for capture) in v. 10. Both Seebass and Sprinkle view שלח יד as an idiom for committing any sort of wrongdoing. However, neither justifies the lumping together of negligence with intentional wrongdoing.

In order to reconcile the use of שלח יד with death and injury, Westbrook points to the distinction between the bailee and hirer of animals, addressed in the final section of the Covenant Code’s bailment law. The hirer, or renter, pays to use the animal for his own benefit; the bailee, on the other hand, watches the animal for the benefit of the bailor. The hirer is liable for death or injury to the animal during the period of hire because such risks naturally accompany his use of the animal. The law holds the bailee, on the other hand, to a lower standard, exempting him from liability for death or injury – unless he has appropriated the animal for his own use, in which case the same risks that apply to the hirer apply to him as well.

Westbrook’s analysis of שלח יד in v. 10 thus distinguishes between the wrong committed by the bailee (i.e., misappropriation) and the ensuing event for which he is then liable (i.e., death, injury, or capture). He defines the wrongdoing of the bailee reflected by שלח יד in both v. 7 and v. 10 as one of misappropriation. Yet this reading is inconsistent: In v. 7, the bailee seeks to clear himself of misappropriating (i.e. stealing) the bailed item; in v. 10, he seeks to clear himself of misappropriating (i.e. illicitly using) the bailed animal. The use of the same English term
“misappropriation” in both cases masks the discrepancy between Westbrook’s understanding of 
שלח יד in the two verses.

In order to read שלח יד consistently in the pericope, while resolving the contextual 
problems of vv. 9-10 as Westbrook does, one would have to understand v. 7 as follows: The 
bailee seeks to clear himself of illicit use of the items bailed to him, which were subsequently 
stolen by a third party thief who has not been found. In this reading, the crux of the law in vv. 6-
7 is not whether the bailee is the thief or not, but whether the bailee illicitly used the goods, such 
that he is liable for theft regardless of whether or not he is the thief. The difference between v. 7 
and v. 6 would remain that if the thief is found, he pays double – and only then the bailee is 
exempt from payment. Otherwise, the bailee is liable for theft – even by a third party – because 
he illicitly used the goods while they were in his care.

While Westbrook’s interpretation, or a modification thereof, indeed resolves the problem 
of how שלח יד fits with death and injury, it creates an unnecessary complication: One would 
expect the bailee’s alleged wrongdoing to relate more directly to whatever mishap befell the item 
or animal bailed. The preceding resolution requires an additional step of the bailee becoming 
liable for the mishap once he has breached his obligations by committing a wrongdoing, without 
that wrongdoing being the direct cause of the mishap per se; presumably, the animal’s death, 
injury, or capture would not need to be the result of the bailee’s misappropriation in order to hold 
him liable.³ Despite the brevity of the biblical laws, we ought to prefer an explanation that 
requires a closer connection between the wrongdoing and what goes wrong.⁴

Let us consider another option. Without addressing the language שלח יד, Charles 
Fensham has cast the herding law specifically as one treating scenarios where the bailee is 
suspected of negligence.⁵ In fact, from a contextual perspective, negligence best fits the
scenarios attached to the bailee of animals. It is highly unlikely that a shepherd would deliberately kill or wound an animal in his care: He does not stand to benefit personally from this action, and it is implausible that a flock-owner would entrust his animals with someone who would maliciously kill or wound them. On the other hand, it is perfectly plausible for a shepherd to slack off and negligently allow an animal in his care to die, suffer an injury, or be captured. Furthermore, although a negligence reading has not been applied to the case of deposit of goods, such an interpretation is plausible in v. 7: The bailee is accused not of stealing the goods himself, but of negligently allowing for a theft to transpire.

While contextually, a negligence reading fits both v. 7 and v. 10, some have ruled out this option on linguistic grounds. Westbrook, for example, argues that “the language of the phrase [šālah yādō] excludes negligence.” Presumably, this is because throughout the Bible살ח יד represents a physical and often aggressive action, whereas negligence indicates, in Westbrook’s words, “an omission on the herdsman’s part.”

If we take a broader look at the biblical Hebrew root שלח, we find that it can refer not only to sending or extending in general, but also to actions with a specifically projectile or downward orientation. For example, in both the G and D stems, שלח is used of casting arrows or fire. Numerous Psalms refer to God reaching down (שלח ו) from the skies and sending down (שלח ב) various gifts and blessings. שלח occurs in conjunction with other downwardly oriented roots, such as מט and לפל ‘to cause to fall’.

Psalm 147:15-18 likewise collocates the divine actions of ‘sending down’ (שלח) God’s word with various acts of precipitation; as God sends down his word to the earth, he also sends down snow, frost, and hail. In the D-stem, further examples of downwardly oriented actions include dropping a
In fact, the noun שֶׁלַח may refer in some contexts to a pit or the underworld, parallel to שְׁחַת.

In returning to the idiom שלח יד, let us consider that שלח sometimes carries a connotation of downward or projectile motion. This suggests that, in addition to the better-known literal sense of ‘reaching out the hand,’” there may be an alternative literal translation of שלח יד as “cast down or drop the hand.” This alternative literal understanding of שלח יד may allow us to identify a new idiomatic understanding of שלח יד as well, based on an Akkadian interdialectal semantic equivalent, namely the Akkadian phrase aḫa nadû.

Akkadian aḫa nadû literally means ‘to cast down or drop the arm’, but is widely attested as an idiom for negligence or generally lax behavior. It occurs frequently in both legal and extralegal contexts (e.g. letters, wisdom literature) across periods, and is often paired with egû, another Akkadian term for negligence. While the verbal idiom aḫa nadû and its related nominal idiom nī i aḫi occur in various contexts, one finds numerous cases of their collocation with verbs meaning ‘to guard, watch over’ (especially naṣāru). Take, for example, this directive in a letter to refrain from negligence, [in source 2 on the handout]:

Place into safekeeping (*naṣāru) 10 sheqels silver worth of dry bran…Do not be negligent (*nī i aḫi) about safeguarding (*naṣāru) the dry bran (CT 52 183:15-16, 19-20)

At first glance, the comparison of aḫa nadû with šālaḥ yād might raise doubts. The nouns yād ‘hand’ and aḫa ‘arm’ do not seem an exact semantic match; one might prefer a parallel between BH yād and Akkadian qātu (‘hand’) or between BH zērōa ‘arm’ and Akkadian aḫu ‘arm’. Yet the words yād ‘hand’ and aḫu ‘arm’ are not too far apart. While one might think of ‘hand’ and ‘arm’ as distinct terms, both BH and Akkadian blur this distinction, and in fact, hand/arm
polysemy is well-documented cross-linguistically. Thus there are cases where yād refers to the arm, and ahu may also refer to the hand. Further, in addition to ahu, Akkadian has a second term for ‘arm’ – idu – which is cognate to BH yād ‘hand’, and indeed, idu is sometimes best translated ‘hand’ as well. Thus, a biblical idiom could utilize the word yād where Akkadian uses ahu.

Moreover, the verbs שלח and nadû bear numerous semantic overlaps: Both may refer to casting arrows or fires, or casting into fire; both are used of throwing into a pit; and both can refer to letting water flow.

The idioms aha nadû and *šālah yād thus correspond on multiple levels: In terms of the individual components that comprise the verbal idioms, we have demonstrated the equivalence of verbal elements nadû and šālah and of nominal elements ahu and yād. As for the idiom as a whole, while aha nadû occurs in varied contexts, it frequently refers to negligence in contexts of watching property. The interpretation of šālah yādō in Exodus 22:7, 10 as referring to negligence allows for a coherent reading of the laws. With the correspondence of individual elements of the idiom and the contextual reading of negligence in the context of bailment in Exodus 22:7, 10, we surmise that šālah yādō, like aha nadû, refers to negligent behavior.

If šālah yādō means “behaved negligently,” and *mēleket rē’ehū means “the property of the other,” we are left with the task of interpreting the preposition b- of bimle’ket rē’ehū. The simplest translation of b- in this case is “with respect to,” though the preposition may have an adversative sense (he commits negligence against his fellow’s property). Because the preposition modifies property, rather than the wronged party, I prefer to translate “with respect to.” I propose, then, the following translation of šālah yādō bimle’ket rē’ehū: “he behaved negligently toward the other’s property.” Verse 7 and v. 10 thus both reflect the suspicion
that the bailee has committed negligence and thereby allowed for theft of goods, or death, injury, or capture of animals in his care.

This understanding of the biblical bailment law as engaging negligence also accords well with Mesopotamian legal concepts of bailment. LH 125 [handout] states that

If a man gives his property for safekeeping and his property together with the householder’s property is lost either by (theft achieved through) a breach or by scaling over a wall, the householder who was careless (ša iğīma) shall make restitution and shall restore to the owner of the property that which was given to him for safekeeping and which he allowed to be lost

Although LH 125 introduces elements absent from the law in Exodus, such as the criterion of joint loss, it treats essentially the same premise that we have identified in v. 7: A bailee incurs liability for negligently allowing a thief to come and steal the property in his care.

Hammurabi’s laws relating to herding similarly consider negligence as a criterion for liability: LH 267, for example, holds liable “a shepherd [who] behaves negligently (iğīma) and allows mange/pissatum to develop in the enclosure.” The interpretation of שלך ידו as relating to negligence thus fits well within a broader ANE context of bailment, both in practice documents including directives to refrain from negligence while watching another’s property, and in laws that hold bailees of goods and of animals accountable for negligence.

In sum, I have argued that previous interpretations of שלך ידו inadequately fit both of the legal situations in which the idiom occurs in the biblical law of bailment. Based on contextual evidence and legal logic, linguistic consideration of the biblical Hebrew root שלך, an Akkadian interdialectal semantic equivalent aha nadā, I have argued that the idiom שלך ידו bears a legal nuance, to behave negligently, in addition to its lay meanings. This interpretation allows
for a coherent reading of the law, and also finds a contextual parallel in the Laws of Hammurabi’s treatment of bailment.
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1. Exodus 22:6-12 (deposit of silver and goods; herding)

NJPS tr.
6. When a man gives money or goods to another for safekeeping, and they are stolen from the man’s house – if the thief is caught, he shall pay double;
7. if the thief is not caught, the owner of the house shall deposite before God that he has not laid hands on the other’s property.
8. In all charges of misappropriation – pertaining to an ox, an ass, a sheep, a garment, or any other loss, whereof one party alleges, “This is it” – the case of both parties shall come before God: he whom God declares guilty shall pay double to the other.
9. when a man gives to another an ass, an ox, a sheep or any other animal to guard, and it dies or is injured or is carried off, with no witness about,
10. an oath before the Lord shall decide between the two of them that the one has not laid hands on the property of the other; the owner must acquiesce, and no restitution shall be made.
11. But if [the animal] was stolen from him, he shall make restitution to its owner.
12. If it was torn by beasts, he shall bring it as evidence; he need not replace what has been torn by beasts.

2. CT 52 183:15-16, 19-20
Place into safekeeping (šussirma) 10 sheqels silver worth of dry bran…Do not be negligent (nidi aḥīm) about safeguarding the dry bran.

3. Laws of Hammurabi 125 (Roth tr.)
If a man gives his property for safekeeping and his property together with the householder’s property is lost either by (theft achieved through) a breach or by scaling over a wall, the householder who was careless (ša ʾigūma) shall make restitution and shall restore to the owner of the property that which was given to him for safekeeping and which he allowed to be lost…
Paul Humbert, “‘Etendre la main’ (Note de lexicographie hébraïque),” VT 12 (1962), 383-395. The idiomatic or metaphorical use of the hand, like many other body parts, is a productive phenomenon cross-linguistically. For a cognitive linguistics account of hand idioms in English—a number of which have parallels in Hebrew and other Semitic languages—see Zoltan Kovecses, Metaphor: A Practical Introduction (New York: Oxford UP, 2002), 207-211. Of the prevalence and nature of idioms with body parts in Semitic languages, see Greenstein, “Trans-Semitic,” 331; Greenstein, “Trans-Semitic,” 329 also gives examples of similar hand idioms in BH and Akkadian.

See e.g. NJPS: NRSV; NIV; and similarly ‘put his hand’ in KJV.

See Wright, Inventing God’s Law, 242 (v. 7), 266 (v. 10); and cf. David Daube, “Negligence in the Early Talmudic Law of Contract (Peshi‘ah),” in H. Niedermeyer and W. Flume, eds., Festschrift Fritz Schulz (Weimar: H. Böhlau Nachfolger, 1951) 1: 127-28. JPS translates peša‘ in v. 8 as ‘misappropriation’, and various discussions of v. 7 describe the wrong envisioned there as misappropriation or theft. See for example Paul, Studies, 90, who cites the JPS translation of v. 7 (“laid hands”) but then paraphrases “the bailee must depose… that he has not misappropriated the articles given to him for safekeeping”; Martin Noth, Exodus (J. S. Bowden, tr.; OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster P, 1962), 184; B. S. Childs, The Book of Exodus: A Critical, Theological Commentary (OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster P, 1974), 475-77; Otto, “Die rechtshistorische Entwicklung,” 152-154; idem., Wandel, 17; Westbrook, “Deposit Law,” 363. See also Sprinkle, Book of the Covenant, 150, who does not maintain a hand idiom in translation (‘trespass’) but interprets similarly: “the bailee swears… that he did not ‘trespass against his fellow’s property’, that is, he did not steal it.” Jackson, Semiotics, 95 uses the term “conversion” to describe the action denoted by the verbal expression ṣelah ḥid '-', which effectively refers to the same kind of malfeasance envisioned by the above commentaries. See Garner, ed., Black’s Dictionary of Law, s.v. “conversion”: “The wrongful possession or disposition of another’s property as if it were one’s own; an act or series of acts of willful interference, without lawful justification, with an item of property in a manner inconsistent with another’s right, whereby that other person is deprived of the use and possession of the property.”

Note also the language of Philo of Alexandria, who likewise identifies the alleged wrongdoing of the bailee as deliberate theft or involvement in theft, but perhaps draws on ṣelah ḥid ḥid in his depiction of the bailee who “must go of his own freewill to the court of God and with hands stretched out to heaven swear under the pain of his own perdition that he has not embezzled any part of the deposit nor abetted another in so doing nor joined at all in inventing a theft which never took place.” See Philo, Spec. Laws 4.34,Colson tr., cited by Greengus, Laws in the Bible, 188 n. 2.

See e.g. Schwienhorst-Schönberger, Das Bundesbuch, 196-200; Seebass, “Noch einmal zum Depositenrecht,” 22-23; and see Westbrook, “Deposit Law,” 370-77.

Seebass, “Noch einmal zum Depositenrecht,” 23: “…nicht durch eigene Ungeschicklichkeit oder in Böswilligkeit den Tod, Bruch oder Raub eines Tieres gefördert hatte.”

Sprinkle, Book of the Covenant, 149-50.

Note that Westbrook considers the subject of v. 13 a hirer, who pays the animal’s owner in order to use it, rather than a borrower. See Westbrook, “Deposit Law,” 371.

Note the relevance of the distinction between misappropriation and theft here: The bailee does not steal the animal but illicitly “borrows” it for his own use, without intending to deprive its owner of it permanently. That the owner may never see his animal again as a consequence is not inherent to the wrongdoing intended by ד לְעַשׁ.

For a similar understanding see Rashi, v. 10; Nahmanides, v. 7; and compare their language to bbQ 105b. See also mbBM 3:12. Though Rashi and Nahmanides disagree about the interpretation of the preceding words ℓ’m lḥ’, their understanding of ד לְעַשׁ is the same.

Westbrook characterizes the distinction between the liability of the shepherd-bailee of vv. 9-10 and the hirer (or borrower) of v. 13 as one based on whether the risks of death and injury naturally accompany the shepherd’s tasks: In his view, death and injury are not risks that naturally accompany watching an animal (without using it for one’s own benefit), whereas they do arise naturally from using the animal for oneself as the hirer/borrower would (371). Yet it seems that death, injury, and capture are natural risks of taking an animal out to graze in the open—something that would surely be within the scope of the bailee-shepherd’s responsibilities—and that the difference in liability stems from something other than expected risk (e.g. perhaps that liability correlates to personal gain).

On the other hand, under Roman law, the borrower in a commodatum arrangement (a gratuitous loan of a material object for use) would be liable for any damage that occurred during unauthorized use of the item loaned, regardless of fault. See Andrew Borkowski and Paul du Plessis, Textbook on Roman Law (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005), 299-
300. Although *commodatum* reflects a different situation from the bailment relationships in Exod 22:6-12, the law indicates that in principle a sizable gap could separate the illicit act from the wrong for which one can then be held liable. Without further evidence of this phenomenon in biblical or ANE law, however, it is preferable to pursue a more conservative interpretation.


xii For this point see Schwienhorst-Schönberger, *Das Bundesbuch*, 199; Seebass, “Noch einmal zum Depositenrecht,” 23; Westbrook, “Deposit Law,” 371.


xiv For the G-stem see e.g. 2 Sam 22:15, 17= Ps 18:15, 17; Ps 144:6; in the D-stem see e.g. 1 Sam 20:20; Ezek 5:16.

xv For the G-stem see Lam 1:13; for the D-stem see Ezek 39:6; Hos 8:14; Amos 1:4, 7, 10, 12; 2:2, 5; for the similar phrase ‘cast into (-ב) fire’ see Judg 1:8; 15:5; 20:48; 2 Kgs 8:12; Ps 74:7.

xvi See e.g. Ps 57:4; 78:25; 147:15-18; cf. Job 5:10.

xvii See Ps 78:23-28.


xix Jer 38:6, 11 (וּסָּטְרֵי יִרְּמְּיָהוּ, אֶלַּחָּשֹׁךְ נַפְּשִׁיו) and see Held, “Pits and Pitfalls in Akkadian and Biblical Hebrew,” especially at 174 n. 12. Held takes these more abstractly as ‘death, destruction’, but note the parallel of *šulšu šelah* in Job 33:18 (and see all citations under CAD N1, s.v. *šulšu šelah*).

xx See especially Job 33:18; 36:12, and see Held, “Pits and Pitfalls in Akkadian and Biblical Hebrew,” especially at 174 n. 12. Held takes these more abstractly as ‘death, destruction’, but note the parallel of *šulšu šelah* in Job 33:18 (and see all citations under CAD N1, s.v. *šulšu šelah*). See further Tsevat, “The Canaanite God *Šalah*,” VT 4 (1954), 41-49. It is quite possible that the noun *šulšu šelah* is derived from the root *šlušlu* in a similar way to the noun *šelah* or its development from *š-lš*.

xxi CAD N1, s.v. *nadet* 6; see also Oppenheim, “Idiomatic Accadian,” 269.

xxii For the idiom *ahšu iddimā* in a law collection see CAD N1, s.v. *nadet* 6.

xxiii See e.g. LH lvii 9-58 – the epilogue to LH in which Hammurabi states: “I have not been careless (ul ēgu) or negligent (ahšul addi) toward humankind.” For this translation see Martha T. Roth, Law Collections from Mesopotamia and Asia Minor (SBLWAW 6; Atlanta: Scholars P, 1997).

xxiv *Našāru* is related to Akkadian *maššartu* ‘goods kept in safekeeping’; *maššartu* ‘safekeeping’. The nominal idiom *nīdi ahšul* often (though not always) occurs with negated verb *rašu* forming a verbal expression meaning ‘to be lax, careless’.

xxv See Kraus, AbB 7 183. The translation is my own. Note that *našāru* occurs in the Š-stem here: 10 GÍN KÚ.BABBAR DUH.UD.DU *šussirma*... ana DUH.UD.DU *šussirmi* *nīdi ahšul* la taraššii/ 10 šigši kaspmi *tuhšul* abši *šussirma*... ana tuḫšul abši *šussirmi* *nīdi ahšul* la taraššii

xxvi One finds similar instructions in other contexts pertaining to bailment arrangements, which use terms for negligence other than *ahšu nadet*. For example: “keep (*našāru*) that silver in your hand; do not be negligent (*egā*) in guarding (*našāru*) the silver” (YOS 2 11:10; translation is that of Greeninus, Laws in the Bible, 190); “do not be negligent (*šelu*) about guarding (*massartu*) the dates” (PBS 1/2 43 no.90; translation is my own).


xxviii [Do] not be negligent about looking after (*našāru*) the personnel of the house/ and do not be careless (*nīdi ahšul*) about guarding (*našāru*) PN (especially) (A 3520:17, 20) [See translation in CAD N2, s.v. *našāru* ] [Do] not grow lax (*nīdi ahšul*) in watching over (*našāru*) the house, the boy, and the girl (A 3530:8) [ibid.]

xxix Do not be careless (*nīdi ahšul*) about looking after (*parāšu*) the interests of the house or about watching over (*ḥāšu*) the house constantly during the night (AbB 9 117:12-16) [For this translation see M. Stol, *Letters from Yale* (AbB 9; Leiden: Brill, 1981), 77.]

See P. R. Ackroyd, “yād,” in G. J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 5: 400; Cornelis Houtman, *Exodus*, vol. 1 (Kampen: Kok, 1993), 24. For *āḫu* with the meaning hand, see e.g. ABL 110 r. 8, cited in CAD A1, s.v. *āḫu* B 1a, with the note that the “context [requires] the mng. ‘hand’” – specifically ‘hand’, and not ‘arm (including the hand)’.

In addition to Ackroyd and Houtman’s evidence for hand/arm polysemy in BH, consider that the BH term that specifically means ‘arm’ – *zērôā* – occurs mostly in parallelism with *yād* (mostly in contexts of poetry or other “elevated language,” e.g. in speeches) or in poetry, and only rarely occurs alone in regular BH prose. *Yād* is significantly more productive than *zērôā*; thus Even-Shoshan cites 91 attestations of BH *zērôā* compared to 1,617 attestations of BH *yād* [Avraham Even-Shoshan, ed., *A New Concordance of the Bible* (Jerusalem: Kiryat Sefer, 1993), s.v. *zērôā*; *yād* 1]. *Yād* also shares with Akkadian *āḫu* and *idu* a number of senses not shared by *āḫu*, including ‘side’ (also not shared by Akk. *qātu*) and ‘handle’.

**CAD I-J, s.v. *idu***. Cognates of *yād* are well-attested in languages deriving from Proto-Semitic, sometimes with the meaning ‘hand’, sometimes with ‘arm’, and sometimes with both. See A. Murtonen, ed., *Hebrew in Its West Semitic Setting* (Leiden: Brill, 1989) Part 1, section Bb, 211, for an overview.

**This is true regardless of the source of connection between the idioms: A direct calque could allow for this variation, given the blurred distinction between hand and arm in both BH and Akkadian conceptions; idioms deriving from a shared ancestor could likewise result in this divergence; and idioms developing autonomously in separate places of a common culture could just as easily vary in this way.**

**For *šillaḥ* with arrows as the object see 1 Sam 20:20; Ezek 5:16; for *nadā* see HSS 13 195:5; JEN 519:7. For *šillaḥ* with fire see e.g. Judg 1:8; 20:48; 2 Kgs 8:12; Ezek 39:6; Hos 8:14; Amos 1:4, 7, 10, 12; 2:2, 5; Ps 74:7; for *nadā* with fire see the many citations under CAD N1, s.v. *nadā*. *šillaḥ* also occurs in the context of letting a part of the body (hair) grow long in Ezek 44:20 (and compare Ezek 17:6, where the subject is not hair but a plant), which might be comparable to the Akkadian idiom under consideration: The sense of Ezek 44:20 is to let the hair grow by refraining from cutting it, i.e. by not doing anything – an image similar to that invoked by ‘dropping the arm’, i.e. doing nothing (which seems to be the root of the association with negligence). Note that the arm is not the only body part + *nadā* idiom for negligence; see also *lēta nadā* (lit. ‘drop the cheek’). This is not to suggest that letting the hair grow is an idiom for negligence, but to point out that, like some instances of ‘dropping the arm’ or ‘dropping the cheek’, occurs in relation to refraining from taking some action.

**This meaning of *b-* is well attested in BH, and is especially common with verbs of transgression; e.g. *ḥṭ* (e.g. Gen 42:22); *m*l (e.g. Lev 5:21); *pš* (e.g. Isa 43:27). In these citations, though, *b-* modifies the person (or deity) against whom the person commits some wrong. For adversative *b-* following a body part see e.g. Gen 16:12; Ps 73:9.

**Cf. Lev 5:22.**

**Compare the use of prepositions *ana* and *eli* with *āḫa nadā* in Akkadian; see citations under CAD N1, s.v. *nadā*.**