

HAND Part of the human body, namely the terminal part of the arm that enables a person to make and use tools and perform functions. The Greek and Hebrew words that are translated by the English word “hand” appear approximately 1,800 times. Of these occurrences to which “hand” is referred, the literal sense is intended some 500 times, and the figurative sense some 1,300 times.

The references to “hand” often encompassed the idea of parts of a hand. Thus, in [Gen. 41:42](#), when Pharaoh took his signet ring “from his hand” and placed it “on Joseph’s hand,” “hand” was used in the place of “finger.” Likewise, in [Ezek. 23:42](#), “hand” was used to mean wrists: “they put bracelets on the hands of the women.” The context in which the word appears determines the meaning and usage of the word.

The largest number of figurative uses of “hand” relate to God. The “hand of God” or “in Thy hand” is an idiom referring to the supreme and almighty power and authority of God ([1 Chron. 29:12](#)). In [Isa. 59:1](#) God’s hand was described as mighty. [Exodus 13:3–16](#) described God’s deliverance of Israel from Egypt by His “strong hand.” The creative work of God involved the use of His hands to make the heavens and the earth ([Pss. 8:6; 95:5](#)). God uses His hand to uphold and guide the righteous ([Pss. 37:24; 139:10](#)). Punishment and affliction come from the hand of God ([Exod. 9:3; Deut. 2:15; Judg. 2:15; 1 Sam. 7:13; 12:15; Ruth 1:13](#)). The hand of God can be upon someone in either a good or bad sense. In a good sense, it meant to bring aid, while the negative connotation meant to hinder or distress ([Amos 1:8](#)).

The phrase “into someone’s hand” was used figuratively to convey the idea of authority involving responsibility, care, or dominion over someone or something ([Gen. 9:2](#)). Examples of this concept include: Sarah’s authority over Hagar ([Gen. 16:6, 9](#)); Joseph’s administration of Potiphar’s house ([Gen. 39:3–8](#)); and the role of Moses and Aaron as leaders of Israel ([Num. 33:1](#)). Victory and deliverance were portrayed also by the use of this phrase. Victory over someone was conveyed by the phrase delivered “into your hand” ([Josh. 6:2](#); cp. [Gen. 49:8](#)), while deliverance was

understood as “out of the hand of” ([Exod. 3:8 KJV](#)).

Functions of the hand were often used by biblical writers to identify certain uses of the word. Since a person takes possession of objects with the hand, the biblical writers adapted “hand” to mean possession. A literal translation of [Gen. 39:1](#) would include the statement that Potiphar bought Joseph “from the Ishmaelites.” In [1 Kings 11:31](#) Jeroboam was told that the Lord was about to tear the kingdom “from the hand” of Solomon.

“To give the hand” meant that one had pledged or submitted to another, as in [2 Kings 10:15](#) and [Ezra 10:19](#). Submission to the Lord is implied in [2 Chron. 30:8](#), where “yield to” is literally “give hand to.”

“To stretch the hand” was used to convey two thoughts: attacking the enemy in battle ([Josh. 8:19, 26](#)) and an intense desire for communion with God ([Ps. 143:6](#)).

Work or the action in which one is involved is expressed by the words “work of your hand” ([Deut. 2:7; 30:9 NASB](#)). In [1 Sam. 23:16](#) Jonathan’s helping David is literally “he strengthened his hand in God,” that is, increased his faith and hope in God’s help.

The Hebrew phrase “high hand” indicated willful rebellion against God ([Num. 15:30; Deut. 32:27](#)) but also military power ([Exod. 14:8; Mic. 5:9](#)). A similar image is projected by the phrase “shaking the hand” ([Isa. 10:32 KJV; 11:15](#)). The movement of the hand was interpreted as a sign of contempt and displeasure, or lack of respect. When used in reference to God, it symbolized God’s warning and punishment.

Hebrew “to fill the hand” expressed the consecration of a priest ([Judg. 17:5](#)) or a congregation’s dedication ([2 Chron. 29:31](#)).

The word “hand” was used in a number of specialized ways. It came to mean “side,” perhaps because of the location of the hands and arms on the body. A peculiar use was that of hand for “monument” ([1 Sam. 15:12](#)). The spreading of the hands denoted a large “space” ([Gen. 34:21](#)). See *Laying on of Hands*; *Work*; *Worship*.

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