

“TO ORDAIN” OR NOT “TO ORDAIN”?

THE MEANING OF *millē’ yād*

By

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To Rachel, my beloved wife,
of whom only the highest praise suffices

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Following his anointing as king of Israel and his instruction to “smite the house of Ahab” (2 Kgs 9:7 [1-10]), Jehu conspired against Joram, the current acting king of Israel (v.14). Having devised a plan, Jehu travelled to Jezreel to meet Joram (v.16). From Jezreel, Joram spotted Jehu and rode out to meet him in order to divine his purpose in coming (vv.21-22a). Upon learning of Jehu’s intentions, Joram fled (vv.22b-23). At this point, “Jehu drew his bow with all his strength, and shot Joram between the shoulders, so that the arrow pierced his heart; and he sank in his chariot” (v.24, NRSV).¹

In this fairly straightforward passage of Jehu’s coup, the reader meets with a most intriguing phrase: *wěyēhû millē’ yādô baqqešet* (2 Kgs 9:24a). While English translations tend to render the phrase as “Jehu drew his bow [with all his strength],”² a literal translation of the Hebrew reads “Jehu filled his hand with a bow.” Contextually, it seems clear what Jehu was doing. Likely for this reason, as evidenced by the English translations, scholars typically translate this occurrence of the phrase *millē’ yād* in an idiomatic way.³ Yet, not only is this occurrence of the phrase translated idiomatically, but so is each of the other seventeen. However, rather than performing a task with full

¹ Unless otherwise noted, such as here, all translations are my own.

² In addition to the NRSV, cited above, both the NJPS and NIV simply render “Jehu drew his bow” while the KJV reads “Jehu drew a bow with his full strength.”

³ Except when transliterating a verse, the phrase will be rendered as the unconjugated and undeclined *millē’ yād*.

strength, as understood in this example, *millē' yād* is typically understood as referring to the ordination of priests.⁴

Of the eighteen occurrences of *millē' yād* in the Hebrew Bible, only thirteen explicitly mention or refer to priests or their possible ordination.⁵ Given that over one-quarter (technically just shy of 28%) of occurrences exist outside of priestly ordination contexts, the current axiomatic identification of the phrase as meaning “to ordain a priest” is bound to be at least somewhat problematic. Moreover, even in those contexts where priests and their ordination are at the fore, *millē' yād* is not necessarily used in a consistent way.

⁴ Many scholars treat this phrase as if it appears solely in the context of priestly ordination. For example, Jacob Milgrom states “This idiom always refers to the installation of persons in priestly functions” (*JPS Torah Commentary: Numbers* [Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1990]: 15). Similarly, Baruch Levine claims: “In biblical literature, *millē' yād* is used only with respect to the appointment of priests” (*Numbers 1-20* [AB 4a; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993]:155). See also: Leopold Sabourin, *Priesthood: A Comparative Study* (Leiden: Brill, 1973): 137; Baruch A. Levine, *JPS Torah Commentary: Leviticus* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989): 53; Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16* (AB 3; New York: Doubleday, 1991): 538-39; and William C. Propp, *Exodus 19-40* (AB 2a; New York: Doubleday, 2006):452.

⁵ The eighteen occurrences are: Exod 28:41; 29:9, 29, 33, 35; 32:29; Lev 8:33; 16:32; 21:10; Num 3:3; Judg 17:5, 12; 1 Kgs 13:33; 2 Kgs 9:24; 1 Chr 29:5; 2 Chr 13:9; 29:31; and Ezek 43:26. To these Gerald Klingbeil adds 1 Kgs 8:15, 24; 2 Chr 6:4, 15; Ps 26:10; Isa 1:15; and Jer 44:25 for a total of twenty-five occurrences (see Gerald Klingbeil, *A Comparative Study of the Ritual of Ordination as Found in Leviticus 8 and Emar 369* [Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1998]: 286-87). His identification of the phrase is broader than that addressed in this thesis. While Klingbeil considers occurrences where *yād* precedes as well as follows the verb *mālē'*, this thesis deals solely with those occurrences in which *yād* directly follows the verb *mālē'*.

The thirteen occurrences relating to priestly ordination are: Exod 28:41; 29:9, 29, 33, 35; Lev 8:33; 16:32; 21:10; Num 3:3; Judg 17:5, 12; 1 Kgs 13:33; 2 Chr 13:9. To these Gerald Klingbeil adds Exod 32:29; 2 Chr 29:31 and Ezek 43:26 for a total of sixteen occurrences (see Klingbeil, *Comparative Study*, 286-87). Snijders and Fabry second Klingbeil on the addition of Exod 32:29 and 2 Chr 29:31, but disagree with the addition of Ezek 43:26. Additionally, they add Lev 4:5 based on the LXX and read a second occurrence of the phrase in Lev 8:33, also for a total of 16 occurrences in relation to the ordination of priests (see Snijders and Fabry, “אָלֵךְ,” *TDOT* 8:301-02).

While there are occurrences in which the meaning “to ordain a priest” is valid, the complications mentioned above suggest that it may not be the basic meaning of the phrase. As a result, *millē’ yād* and its supposed meaning beg further study. Currently, however, there are few places one may turn to inquire concerning the meaning and nature of the phrase *millē’ yād*. Most scholarly conversation is embedded in commentaries.⁶ Typically, little more is said there than merely identifying *millē’ yād* as an idiom for the ordination of priests—thus compounding the problem.⁷ As a result, exegetes are left to twist their way through explaining the unique occurrences of *millē’ yād*, especially those outside of priestly contexts.

The purpose of this study is to help straighten those tortuous paths. To do so, this thesis contends that *millē’ yād* does not have a basic meaning of “to ordain a priest.” Rather, it argues for a more general meaning that maintains the idea of priestly ordination, but as a nuance of that more general meaning. While the meaning proposed herein has been previously suggested to varying degrees, it has only been applied to priestly contexts. As such, this thesis will bring back that idea, move it to the forefront (setting “to ordain a priest” as one of its nuances), and apply it to all contexts—not just priestly ordination.

I will first elucidate the problems inherent with a solitary meaning of “to ordain a priest” for *millē’ yād* via a brief verse-by-verse analysis of each of the eighteen occurrences. After delineating issues associated with the meaning of “to ordain a priest,”

⁶ A notable exception is Klingbeil, *Comparative Study*, 286-88, 307-08, 322.

⁷ It should be noted that while Milgrom identifies *millē’ yād* as an idiom for the ordination of priests, he does so through a much longer and more intricate method than most. His argument relies heavily upon the Akkadian cognate phrase *qātam mullūm* (see *Leviticus 1-16*, 538-39).

I will analyze the constituent words of the phrase *millē' yād*. As a result of that analysis, I will propose a new basic meaning for *millē' yād*. I will then derive support by looking at how the Septuagint translates *millē' yād* as well as by analyzing the Akkadian parallel, *qātam mullûm*. Finally, I will systematically apply the proposed meaning to each of the eighteen occurrences in order to demonstrate its applicability and viability.

CHAPTER II

MEANING OF *millē` yād*

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the English verb “to ordain” has a wide range of meanings falling under two general categories: 1) “to put in order, arrange, or prepare;” and 2) “to decree, order, or appoint.” Interestingly, by the early twentieth century, the first general category seems to have largely fallen out of usage, as have many of the definitions within the second general category.⁸ As such, when one looks to a modern dictionary, one only finds the second general category, which is typically divided into entries along the lines of “to order (something) officially” and “to make (someone) a priest; to confer holy orders on.”⁹

The basic idea of “to ordain,” in sum, is to empower to function in a specific way within a specific sphere. Thus, when referring to people, “to ordain” is to appoint them to a specific office in order to perform specific duties, and when referring to objects or things, “to ordain” is to order and set them in motion so as to perform a specific function(s). Inherent within the definition of “to ordain” is the fact that someone of greater power or higher authority is the one who performs the ordaining. As such, an individual cannot ordain themselves.

⁸ See www.oed.com, s.v. “ordain, v.”

⁹ See oxforddictionaries.com/definition/English/ordain. One could also perform an internet search for “define ordain” and find a very similar set of definitions as well as links to other dictionaries attesting similar entries.

The problem addressed in this thesis is not so much that *millē' yād* is understood as meaning “to ordain” as that it is typically understood as meaning “to ordain a priest.” While most scholars are united in rendering it as such, they are not united on are the various additional nuances placed upon it. For instance, some regard this phrase also referring to the priestly paycheck, others see in it the literal placing of sacrificial offerings into the hand, and still others believe it hearkens back to a time when an actual symbol of office was placed into the hand. None of these additional meanings have a part in the English definition of “to ordain.” As such, prior to discussing the issues surrounding *millē' yād* as meaning “to ordain a priest,” we will first discuss these supplemental meanings.

Fixed Income

Several scholars assert that *millē' yād* refers to the hiring of a priest.¹⁰ According to this line of reasoning, *millē' yād* is still understood as referring to ordination, but as a result of the hiring process. For example, Erhard Gerstenberger explains the meaning of *millē' yād* as signifying the “official investiture of a priest through a financially powerful

¹⁰ Discussion can be found in Erhard S. Gerstenberger, *Leviticus: A Commentary* (trans. Douglas W. Stott; OTL; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 111; Klingbeil, *Comparative Study*, 75, 287-88, 322; Martin Noth, *The Laws in the Pentateuch and Other Studies* (trans. D. R. Ap-Thomas; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1962), 232-33; Snijders and Fabry, *TDOT* 8:302; and Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions* (2d ed.; trans. John McHugh; London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1965), 346-47. Other scholars who mention the viewpoint include: Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25-48* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 611; Philip J. Budd, *Numbers* (WBC 5; Nelson Reference and Electric, 1984), 33; M. Delcor, “אָל מִלְּ” *to be full, fill*,” *TLOT* 2:665; Martin Noth, *Exodus: A Commentary* (trans. J. S. Bowden; OTL; Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1962), 231; J. Alberto Soggin, *Judges: A Commentary* (trans. John Bowden; OTL; Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1981), 265; Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel, Chapters 25-48* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press), 435.

employer,” and thus it “involves primarily the fixing of income.”¹¹ There appear to be two primary arguments in support of this position: first, Judg 17:10-12 and 18:4 explicitly mention hiring in the context of ordination; second, ARM 2 13:17 attests the Akkadian parallel of the phrase *millē’ yād* in regards to obtaining spoils of battle. As will be shown, those three arguments are not above scrutiny. Additionally, upon closer inspection, they do not actually support the purposed connection between *millē’ yād* and fixed income.

Judges 17:10-12; 18:4

One of the primary arguments for *millē’ yād* referring to both priestly ordination and income is Judg 17:10-12, where Micah offers a Levite the position of priest in his home.

Micah said to him [the Levite], “Stay with me and become my advisory priest (*wehyēh-lî lē’āb ūlkōhēn*) and I will give you ten pieces of silver a year, an allotment of clothing, and your food.” The Levite went, and the Levite agreed to dwell with the man: the young man became as one of his sons (*wayyēhî hanna’ar lô kē’ahad mibbānāyw*). So Micah filled the hand of the Levite (*wayyēmallē’ mîkâ ’et-yad hallēwî*), and the young man served as his priest (*wayyēhî-lô hanna’ar lēkōhēn*); he was in the house of Micah.

This argument is best understood in light of Judg 18:4, where the same Levite specifically says he was hired by Micah: “And he [the Levite] said to them [the Danites] ‘Micah did thus and thus to me, and he hired me (*wayyiškērēnî*), and I served as his priest (*wā’ēhî-lô lēkōhēn*).” The line of reasoning seems to be that, upon accepting Micah’s offer of employment in vv.10-11, Micah ostensibly filled the Levite’s hand with his hire. Thus, *millē’ yād* should be understood as referring to the fixed income of the Levite.

¹¹ Gerstenberger, *Leviticus*, 111.

Additionally, since the Levite is not mentioned to be Micah's priest until after the mention of *millē' yād*, the idiom is also to be understood as referring to his ordination.

It is clear from Judg 17:10 and 18:4 that the Levite is hired with a promised salary of “ten pieces of silver a year, an allotment of clothing, and food” (17:10). Additionally, it seems clear from 17:12 (“and the young man served as his priest” [*wayyēhî-lô hanna'ar lēkōhēn*]) and 18:4 (“I served as his priest” [*wā'ēhî-lô lēkōhēn*]) that the Levite was, at some point, ordained to perform the duties of a priest at Micah's shrine. Micah could not have ordained the Levite had he not accepted the position, not to mention the Levite would not likely have accepted the position without a salary. However, the above evidence does not clearly establish that *millē' yād* denotes both ordination and the hiring, or fixing of income, of the Levite.

Since the relationship between priestly ordination and *millē' yād* will be discussed in Chapter 3, here the question at hand concerns the potential connection between *millē' yād* and hiring. This is where Judg 17:5 proves illuminating.

The man Micah had a temple (*bēt' ēlōhîm*), and he made an ephod and teraphim, and he filled the hand (*wayyēmallē' 'et-yad*) of one of his sons, who served as his priest (*wayyēhî-lô lēkōhēn*).

Here, in the same exact language as is later used with the priest, Micah is said to have filled the hand of his son (*wayyēmallē' 'et-yad*), who then, also in the same exact language, served as his priest (*wayyēhî-lô lēkōhēn*). The only difference between what Micah did for his son and what he did for the Levite is the offering of a salary.

Therefore, if the phrase *millē' yād* refers to salary, why was the son not said to have been offered a salary? It is possible that a son might have access to his father's wealth, thereby negating the need of a salary. However, it is hard to ignore the fact the language used to indicate Micah filled the hand of his son (*wayyēmallē' 'et-yad*) is the

exact same as that used with the Levite (*wayyěmallē* 'et-yad). Likewise, both the son and the Levite individually, and identically, served as his priest (*wayyěhî-lô lēkōhēn*).

Therefore, it seems difficult to maintain that *millē* 'yād refers to the fixing of the salary when the son is not said to receive one.

ARM 2 13:17

Several scholars cite, or at least reference, ARM 2 13:17 as extrabiblical support for understanding *millē* 'yād as relating to priestly income.¹² In this text Samādaḥum writes to his Lord, Yasmaḥ-Addu, about the fate of the spoils of battle against Šibat. Apparently, rather than apportioning them correctly, several officers attempted to increase their own portions, as indicated by the phrase:¹³

*ana mīl qātīšunu šumūdīm*¹⁴

In order to increase the filling of their hands

The argument is that this phrase corresponds to *millē* 'yād via the parallel Akkadian phrase *qātam mullūm*. Therefore it would appear that *mīl* supposedly corresponds to *mullūm*, and thus *millē* ', and *qātīšunu* to *qātam*, and thus *yād*. Thus this text is used as support for the idea that filling the hand was a way to express a share in income or spoils.

¹² See, e.g., Aelred Cody, *A History of Old Testament Priesthood* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1964), 153 n.22; Delcor, *TLOT* 2:665; Noth, *Exodus*, 231; Noth, *Laws in the Pentateuch*, 231-33; de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 346.

¹³ For an English summary of this text, see particularly p.206 in Paul Hoskisson, "The *Nīšum* 'Oath' in Mari" pages 203-210 in *Mari in Retrospect: Fifty Years of Mari and Mari Studies* (ed. Gordon D. Young; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1992).

¹⁴ The transcribed text, according to Charles, reads: *a-na mi-el qāti(ti)-šu-nu šu-mu-di-im*. The above transliteration follows Delcor, *TLOT* 2:665-66 (see also Noth, *Laws in the Pentateuch*, 232 n.9, who transliterates *ana mīl kātīšunu šumūdīm*).

When considering the Levite received an income in Judg 17:10; 18:4, and the fact priests and Levites received portions of many sacrifices,¹⁵ it is easy to apply this Mari letter to biblical priestly contexts.¹⁶

However, there is an issue with this argument. A better reading for ARM 2 13:17, as proposed by A. Leo Oppenheim, is to refrain from separating the words *mil* and *qātīšunu*.¹⁷ Rather, he suggests it be read as:

*ana melqētīšunu šumūdim*¹⁸

In order to increase their income

¹⁵ Priests regularly received shares from sacrificial offerings. This is made clear in the sacrificial prescriptions of Lev 1-7. For example, an overview of some of the priest's portions is found in Lev 7:7-10, 32-34:

The sin offering is like the guilt offering, there is one instruction for them; the priest who makes atonement with it shall have it. The priest who offers anyone's burnt offering shall have the skin of the burnt offering that he has offered. And every grain offering baked in the oven, and all that is made in a pan or on a griddle, shall belong to the priest who offers it. And every grain offering, mixed with oil or dry, shall belong to all the sons of Aaron equally...And you shall give to the priest the right thigh of your sacrifices of well-being for a *tērûmâ* offering. The one among the sons of Aaron who offers the blood and fat of the well-being offerings shall have the right thigh for his portion. For I have taken the breast of the *tēnûpâ* and the thigh of the *tērûmâ* from the children of Israel's well-being offerings, and have given them unto Aaron the priest and unto his sons as a perpetual statute among the Israelites.

¹⁶ In the words of Snijders and Fabry: "*mutatis mutandi* one might thus take this to refer in the OT to the priests' income" (*TDOT* 8:302).

¹⁷ A. Leo Oppenheim, "The Archives of the Palace of Mari: A Review Article," *JNES* 11 (1952): 129-139. In regards to ARM 2 13:7, he states, "I propose to read *mi-el-qa(t)-ti-šu-nu* (in spite of the hitherto at Mari not attested reading *qat*) on account of Dossin, ARM, I, 103:x+20, *a-na ma-al-qa-ti-šu*. The meaning seems to be "share." (p.135). Durand, in LAPO 17 457, seems to follow Oppenheim's suggestion when he translates "Alors que les chefs de section, en assignant leurs propres parts."

¹⁸ The transliteration for *melqētīšunu* follows that found in CAD 10.1 s.v. *mādu*, p.27; 10.2 s.v. *melqētū*, p.13.

Such a reading emphasizes the idea of income. However, there is neither mention of hand (*qātum*) nor filling (*malû*). In other words, when read this way, ARM 2 13:17 attests neither the Akkadian phrase parallel to *millē' yād*, nor even a portion of that phrase. Therefore a parallel between ARM 2 13:17 and Judg 17:10, or any other occurrence of *millē' yād*, exists only if one already assumes that *millē' yād* refers to income.¹⁹

Sacrificial Offerings

Some scholars believe *millē' yād* to be connected to the literal filling of the hand with sacrifices. During the ordination ceremony, several parts of the sacrifices are placed in the palms of Aaron and his sons:

You shall take from the fat of the ram, the fat tail, the fat which covers the entrails, the appendage of the liver, the two kidneys with the fat which is upon them, and the right thigh because it is the ram of *millû'im*, and one loaf of bread, one ḥalâ of bread with oil, and one wafer out of the basket of unleavened bread which is before the Lord. You shall place everything upon the palms of Aaron and upon the palms of his sons (*šamtā hakkōl 'al kappê 'ahārōn wē'al kappê bānāyw*), and raise them as a wave offering before the Lord. (Exod 29:22-24; see also Lev 8:25-27).²⁰

Some scholars connect the placing of these offerings in the palms (*šām kap*, Exod 29:24; or *nātan kap*, Lev 8:27) with the filling of the hand (*millē' yād*).²¹ One cannot ignore the

¹⁹ In commenting on the phrase *millē' yād*, Milgrom agrees that ARM 2 13 should not be compared to *millē' yād* as it appears in Lev 8:33, or similar contexts (*Leviticus 1-16*, 539). See also Snijders and Fabry, *TDOT* 8:302-03 who claim that Ruprecht successfully argues against the view of the idiom being used in relation to spoils or income on account that the biblical text does not dwell upon or celebrate the idea of the priestly portion.

²⁰ The relevant phrase in Lev 8:27 is: *wayyittēn 'et-hakkōl 'al kappê 'ahārōn wē'al kappê bānāyw*. Thus *nātan* is used as opposed to *šām*.

²¹ See Budd, *Numbers*, 33; Delcor, *TLOT* 2:665; John E. Hartley, *Leviticus* (WBC 4; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1992), 113; Levine, *Numbers 1-20*, 155; Levine, *Leviticus*, 53; Noth, *Laws in the Pentateuch*, 232-33; Snijders and Fabry, *TDOT* 8:302-04; de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 346.

fact that the text explicitly states sacrifices and offerings were literally placed (*śam* or *nātan*) in the palms (*kap*) of the hands of Aaron and his sons. However, one can also not ignore the fact that *śam* and *nātan* differ from *millē*’, as does *kap* from *yād*. If the purpose of the author(s) was to equate the offerings placed in the palms with the phrase *millē*’ *yād*, it would have made more sense, and been more clear, to use *yād* as opposed to *kap*, as well as *millē*’ instead of *śām* (Exod 29:24) or *nātan* (Lev 8:27) in place of the phrase “place in the palms.” That these were not used simply suggests a differently meaning between “place in the palms” (*śām kap*; Exod 29:24) and “fill the hand” (*millē*’ *yād*).²²

Of the things placed into the palms of Aaron and his sons were several pieces of the *millū*’*im* ram. As will be discussed in greater depth later, *millū*’*im* is an abstract noun understood to be formed from the phrase *millē*’ *yād*. In other words, there is a connection between some of what was placed in the palms and the phrase *millē*’ *yād*. However, this connection is not between the act of placing in the palms and the act of filling the hand. Rather, the connection is made with the things placed therein, which may serve the function of foreshadowing the sacrificial work the priests were to perform from this point on.

²² This dissociation seems to be strengthened by the fact that, after the wave offering, Moses was to remove the offerings from the priests’ hands (*yād*; Exod 22:25) or palm (*kap*; Lev 8:28). Such removal must be hearkening back to when Moses first placed them into the priests’ palms (*śām kap*, Exod 29:24; or *nātan kap*, Lev 8:27) for the wave offering. Otherwise, if it hearkened back to the filling of the hand (*millē*’ *yād*), and if *millē*’ *yād* is understood as an idiom meaning “to ordain a priest,” then Moses’ removal of the sacrifices could be read as signifying the removal of the ordination.

Sign of Authority

Based on the literal translation of *millē' yād*, “fill the hand,” and the Akkadian parallel, *qātam mullûm*, some scholars believe the phrase originally referred to the literal filling of a hand with something concrete, such as a symbol of authority or an insignia of office.²³ With the exception of Jehu’s bow, in 2 Kgs 9:24, the Hebrew phrase never identifies what, if anything, is filled into the hand. As Hebrew Bible examples are not available, this proposition seems to rest solely on the evidence of Akkadian sources, and thus remains purely theoretical for Hebrew Bible comparison.

Conclusion

Based upon the definition of the English verb “to ordain,” if *millē' yād* is held to mean “to ordain a priest,” then it refers to the appointing of an individual to a specific priestly office in order to perform the duties of that specific office. Thus, an individual would be ordained as priest **or** a high priest. The only way for a priest to become a high priest would be through an additional ordination. In both cases, in order to officially appoint an individual, the one performing the ordination would need to be of a higher authority or power.

²³ See Block, *Book of Ezekiel*, 611; John Gray, *I & II Kings* (OTL; Philadelphia: The Westminster Press), 333; Levine, *Leviticus*, 205 [note 27 of chapter 8]; Milgrom, *Numbers*, 300; Nahum Sarna, *JPS Torah Commentary: Exodus* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1991), 185; see also Levine, *Numbers 1-20*, 155.

Though not referring to an insignia of office, Philip Budd mentions that some associate the phrase with the giving of a divinatory object, among other things. He goes on to say: “The phrase could simply denote the giving of the office itself. G. B. Gray (*Numbers*, 21) draws attention to an assyrian custom in which the god fills the hand of the king with his kingdom” (Budd, *Numbers*, 33).

Due to the literal meaning of *millē' yād* as “fill the hand of,” there is a tendency to strive to discover with what the hand was actually filled. In light of Judg 17:10-12; 18:4, many have deduced an income was placed into the hand of priests. While a priest would have physically carried whatever wages he received, on account of Judg 17:5, it is not likely designated by the phrase *millē' yād*. Additionally, while further research into ARM 2 13:17 supports the idea of income, it does so at the cost of its connection to *millē' yād*. As such, there does not appear to be any solid ground for reading priestly income into the meaning of *millē' yād*.

While portions of the ordination sacrifice were literally put into the priests hands, it was not done so with the phrase *millē' yād*. Additionally, with the exception of 2 Kgs 9:24, there is no biblical evidence of anything physical actually being placed into the hands of the priests when in the context of *millē' yād*. Context may have things placed in the hands of the priests, however, it is not done with the phrase *millē' yād*. Thus, there does not appear to be any reason to understand the phrase *millē' yād* in a literal sense.

CHAPTER III

THE PROBLEM

The contexts in which the phrase *millē' yād* occurs do not always suggest rendering the phrase as an idiom meaning “to ordain a priest.” While such a meaning works in some contexts, it is problematic in others. In order to demonstrate this issue, a brief exegesis of each of the eighteen occurrences will herein be provided.

Exegesis of Occurrences

Exodus 28:41

Towards the end of detailing the fabrication of the priestly vestments, the Lord instructs Moses in Exod 28:41: “You will dress them (*hilbaštā 'ōtām*)—Aaron, your brother, and his sons with him—and you will anoint them (*ûmāšaḥtā 'ōtām*), and you will fill their hand (*ûmillē'tā 'et-yādām*), and you will sanctify them (*wěqiddaštā 'ōtām*), and they will function as my priests (*wěkikhănû lî*).”²⁴ There are five verbs in this verse: the

²⁴ It is possible that the fourth phrase “and you will sanctify them” is a consequence of the first three. The problem is each of the first four phrases begins with a 2d masculine singular *waw*-consecutive verb. As such, if we were to read the fourth as a result of the first three, then what would stop us from also reading the third as a result of the first two? This happens to be how Cornelis Houtman appears to understand the verse, as he translates it: “You shall put them (the garments) on your brother Aaron and on his sons with him, and you shall anoint them. So you shall install them in their office and consecrate them to minister as my priests” (Cornelis Houtman, *Exodus* [trans. Sierd Woudstra; 4 vols.; Kampen: Kok Publishing House/Leuven: Peters, 1993-2002], 3:522). As viable a translation as this is, it should be noted that it seems to presuppose the meaning of *millē' yād* as “to ordain a priest.”

first four are commands to Moses and the last one is a statement concerning Aaron and his sons. This shift in person, together with the context, suggests it would only be after Moses fulfilled the four commands that Aaron and his sons would be able to serve the Lord as priests. As can be clearly seen, one of those four commands is for Moses to “fill the hand” of Aaron and his sons. Thus, whatever *millē’ yād* means, according to this verse, it is a necessary element in the enabling of Aaron and his sons to function as priests.

If *millē’ yād* is understood as an idiom meaning “to ordain a priest,” then ordaining would constitute one of the four elements culminating in the ability of Aaron and his sons to so serve.²⁵ This is logical, for one must be ordained before properly, or officially, serving as a priest. However, such logic should be tempered by the organization of the verse, which appears to foreshadow Exod 29 in both order and context. It suggests all four commands were requisite in enabling Aaron and his sons to function as priests. As such, the organization seems to suggest the entire verse concerns ordination. Thus, if *millē’ yād* is understood as meaning “to ordain,” it would seem to compromise the overall integrity of the verse by suggesting that dressing, anointing, and possibly even sanctifying were separate and distinct from ordaining.

Therefore, while it is logical for an individual to be ordained prior to serving, the integrity of the verse would seem to require a meaning other than “to ordain a priest” for

²⁵ In line with his translation of this verse, Houtman understands priestly consecration to be identified by the phrase *millē’ yād* and to be a result of only two elements: clothing and anointing (see Houtman, *Exodus*, 3:522). Durham also believes *millē’ yād* to mean “to ordain a priest.” However, rather than understanding it as the result of the clothing and anointing, he includes it as one of a three-part procedure for priestly ordination: clothing, anointing, and ordaining (see John Durham, *Exodus* [WBC 3; Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1987], 389).

millē' yād. At the same time, the meaning cannot be wholly apart from ordination because, according to this verse, it is one of the four integral elements comprising priestly ordination.

Exodus 29:9

Exodus 29 provides the prescription for the ordination of priests.²⁶ This seems to be made clear in v.1a where the Lord, speaking to Moses, says: “This is the thing which you shall do to them [Aaron and his sons] (*ta 'āšeh lāhem*) to sanctify them (*lěqaddēš 'ōtām*) in order [for them] to function as my priests (*lěkakhēn lī*).” It would appear that everything following this introductory statement dictates the process by which Aaron and his sons were to be sanctified so they could serve as priests, in other words, be ordained.²⁷ Within this prescription, the phrase *millē' yād* occurs four times (vv.9b, 29, 33, 35). However, each use of the phrase appears in a unique circumstance and different usage.

The first of these occurrences is found in v.9b where the Lord simply tells Moses: “you will fill the hand of Aaron and his sons (*ūmillē' yad- 'ahārōn wěyad-bānāyw*).” The position and grammar of v.9b allows this occurrence of *millē' yād* to be understood as functioning either as a conclusion to the preceding ritual actions (vv.4-9a) or as an introduction to the sacrifices which follow (vv.10-34).

²⁶ Houtman observes: “Exod. 29 is concerned with more than the consecration of the priesthood. It is about the institution of the cult (cf. 40:18-33). For that reason, relative to Exod. 29, it is better to speak of *institution* of the priesthood than of *consecration* to the priesthood” (*Exodus*, 3:526; emphasis in original). Despite this keen observation, it is out of convenience, rather than ignorance, that this thesis makes occasional reference to the entirety of Exod 29 as referring to priestly ordination.

²⁷ See John Durham, *Exodus*, 293; Noth, *Exodus*, 229-30; Propp, *Exodus 19-40*, 454.

If read as a concluding statement, then *millē' yād* could be understood as summarizing the washing, dressing, and anointing of Aaron and his sons (vv.4-9a).²⁸ Grammatically, there may be nothing wrong with this understanding. However, if *millē' yād* is taken as an idiom meaning “to ordain a priest,” problems do arise for the rest of the chapter. First, as previously mentioned, the chapter as a whole denotes the ordination of priests. Second, in the following verses, the phrase *millē' yād* is used three additional times. Thus a friction exists in understanding v.9b as a concluding statement with *millē' yād* as an idiom meaning “to ordain a priest.”

On the other hand, if read as an introductory statement, then *millē' yād* could be understood as introducing the sacrificial element of the priestly ordination ritual (vv.10-34).²⁹ Similar to understanding v.9b as a concluding remark, there may be nothing grammatically wrong with this understanding. However, if *millē' yād* is taken as an idiom meaning “to ordain a priest,” problems arise within the chapter. As an introductory remark, the meaning of *millē' yād* would be projected forward. This would implicitly suggest that the washing, dressing, and anointing that took place in vv.4-9a play no role in the ordination of Aaron and his sons, which is at odds with v.1a.³⁰ Thus, whether v.9b

²⁸ See Houtman, *Exodus*, 3:533. Though not referring solely to this verse, Snijders and Fabry do have this verse in mind when they remark: “we notice that in the first part of Ex. 29 the ‘filling of the hand’ summarizes several different acts: the washing with water, the putting on of the sacred garments, the placing of the holy diadem, and the anointing with oil (vv. 4,7,9)” (Snijders and Fabry, *TDOT* 8:303).

²⁹ See Durham, *Exodus*, 394; Noth, *Exodus*, 230. Additionally, this is the way the NRSV and NJPS translate the phrase.

³⁰ It is interesting to note that both Durham (*Exodus*, 394) and Noth (*Exodus*, 230) begin their comments on Exod 29 by recognizing that, according to v.1, the chapter provides the instructions for the priests’ ordination. Both also believe *millē' yād* means “to ordain a priest” and that v.9b introduces the sacrificial element. Yet, neither mentions the difficulties surrounding such an interpretation.

serves as an introduction or a conclusion, understanding *millē' yād*, in this context, as an idiom meaning “to ordain a priest” is problematic.³¹

Exodus 29:29

Couched within the instructions for the *millū'îm* offering (vv.19-34), v.29 appears a little out of place. “And the holy garments which belong to Aaron will belong to his sons after him, to be anointed in them (*lēmāšḥâ bāhem*) and to have their hand filled in them (*ûlmallē'-bām 'et-yādām*).” Rather than discussing the *millū'îm* offering or the ordination at hand (in ch.29), this verse seems to lay provision for Aaron’s replacement. This is evident in that the specific context is that of inheriting Aaron’s garments, and thus the office of high priest.³² By definition when individuals are ordained, they are ordained to a specific office. Since priest and high priest are separate offices, Aaron’s successor would therefore need to be ordained a high priest. Such is fitting and bears no problem. The complication resides in the usage of *millē' yād*, specifically in understanding it as designating this ordination.

Verse 29 seems to summarize the order of vv.5-9, thereby suggesting *millē' yād* may here share the same faults as it does in v.9b. In vv.5-6, Moses dresses Aaron in the garments of the high priest prior to anointing him (v.7). Then, after dressing Aaron’s sons (vv.8-9a), the first occurrence of *millē' yād* appears in v.9b. Likewise, here in v.29, the son who is to inherit the priestly vestments is “to be anointed **in them** [the garments] and

³¹ Perhaps for this reason both the NIV (“in this way you shall ordain Aaron and his sons”) and the KJV (“and thou shalt consecrate Aaron and his sons”) translate this phrase in such a way that it could be read as either an introduction or conclusion.

³² This is made even more evident in v.30 when it reads “the son who is priest in his [Aaron’s] place;” that is, the son who is Aaron’s successor.

to have his hand filled **in them** [the garments]” (emphasis added). In other words, Aaron’s successor is first dressed so that he could be anointed and then have his hand filled.³³ Thus, this would suggest that the faults of *millē’ yād* as meaning “to ordain a priest” within v.29 are indeed the same faults in v.9b. If they were “to be anointed in them **and thereby** have their hand filled in them,” then *millē’ yād* would effectively be acting as a summarizing statement. On the other hand, if they were “to be anointed in them **and then** have their hand filled in them,” then *millē’ yād* would effectively be acting like an introductory statement. The syntax suggests either to be possible; however, there are problems with both.³⁴

Exodus 29:33

Concerning the edible portions of the *millū’im* offering, the Lord instructed Moses: “They [Aaron and his sons] shall eat those things with which atonement was made in order to fill their hand (*lēmāllē’ ’et-yādām*),³⁵ in order to sanctify them (*lēqaddēš ’ōtām*); but a stranger shall not eat them because they are holy” (v.33). This occurrence of

³³ An intriguing possibility is noted by Propp: “Theoretically, one could also understand *bām* as “by them,” as if donning the vestments were tantamount to consecration (cf. Num 20:25-28)” (Propp, *Exodus 19-40*, 465). On a similar note, the *bēt* could be read as “through.” As interesting as these ideas are, since nothing would take place until **after** the garments were donned, the above argument is not changed.

³⁴ Referencing this verse as well, as several others (Exod 28:41; Lev 16:32; 21:10), Snijders and Fabry are of the opinion that “the anointing and filling of the hand occur as two separate designations for the consecration of priests” (Snijders and Fabry, *TDOT* 8:303).

³⁵ It should be noted that at least one translation renders this infinitive construct (*lēmāllē’ ’et-yādām*) temporally: “These things shall be eaten only by those for whom expiation was made with them **when they were ordained** and consecrated; they may not be eaten by a layman, for they are holy” (NJPS; emphasis added).

millē' yād does not appear to signify a specific rite or even a series of rites. Rather, it appears to be an intangible result of eating the *millū'îm* offering. Thus, if *millē' yād* is here understood as an idiom meaning “to ordain a priest,” then v.33 would depict the ordination as happening as a result of eating the *millū'îm* offering. The problem is, as previously mentioned, the entirety of Exod 29, as specifically suggested by v.1, provides a prescription for the ordination of Aaron and his sons. Therefore, if *millē' yād* does mean “to ordain a priest,” the integrity of the entire chapter becomes complicated by this verse. How should all the other rites prescribed in this chapter be understood?

Furthermore, how is this usage of the idiom to be correlated with that of v.9b and v.29?

Exodus 29:35

The fourth occurrence of *millē' yād* in Exod 29 is in v.35, where the Lord tells Moses: “thus you will do to Aaron and to his sons, according to everything which I have commanded you; seven days you will fill their hand (*tēmallē' yādām*).” The organization of this verse may suggest that the seven days of hand-filling is an appositive to what Moses was to do to Aaron and his sons. Since *millē' yād* is commonly understood as an idiom meaning “to ordain a priest,” this verse is often viewed as summarizing the entire ordination ritual, thus hearkening back to v.1a.³⁶ The problem lies in that *millē' yād* appears elsewhere within this ritual. Additionally, whatever *millē' yād* is understood to mean, it seems clear it was to take seven days and therefore not be complete until the seventh day had passed.

³⁶ See Durham, *Exodus*, 396; Snijders and Fabry, *TDOT* 8:303.

However, exactly what took place each of those seven days is a point of debate among scholars.³⁷ While some believe that everything was repeated daily for seven days, others believe only part of the prescription was repeated daily.³⁸ If everything were repeated daily for seven days, then v.9 and v.33, along with their respective usage of *millē' yād*, would also be repeated. This means that, if *millē' yād* is understood as meaning “to ordain a priest,” then the problems previously mentioned for v.9 and v.33 would thus be magnified.³⁹ Even if the entire process was not repeated daily, the single occurrence of each v.9 and v.33 would still need to be somehow incorporated within v.35. In short, if *millē' yād* is understood as meaning “to ordain a priest,” then v.35 proves problematic because it would need to somehow incorporate between two and fourteen occurrences (v.9 plus v.33, then multiplied by seven) of *millē' yād* in addition to its own. Thus the question arises: How many times do Aaron and his sons need to be ordained (v.9 and v.33) in order to be ordained (v.35)?

³⁷ For example, Hartley does not believe it likely that everything was repeated daily (see Hartley, *Leviticus*, 115). Milgrom, on the other hand, believes it to be preferable to view all seven days as being alike (see Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 538). Yet, despite their differences, both Hartley and Milgrom agree that it is at the end of the seven days that their ordination is authenticated (see Hartley, *Leviticus*, 115) and “they emerge as full-fledged priests” (Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 538).

³⁸ Among those who believe everything was repeated daily are: Levine, *Leviticus*, 54; Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 536-40; Noth, *Exodus*, 233; Propp, *Exodus 19-40*, 531; Sarna, *Exodus*, 185.

Some of those who do not believe everything daily repeated are: Hartley, *Leviticus*, 115; Klingbeil, *Comparative Study*, 175-76; Gordon J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus* (NICOT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979), 144.

Among those who admit uncertainty as to what took place on each of the seven days, see Klingbeil, *Comparative Study*, 307-308; Propp, *Exodus 19-40*, 465; Snijders and Fabry, *TDOT* 8:304.

³⁹ Verse 29 is left out because it is concerned with a future rite as opposed to the immediate inauguration of Aaron and his sons into the priesthood.

Leviticus 8:33

Whereas Exod 29 is understood as prescribing priestly ordination, Lev 8 is understood as describing their ordination. However, that does not mean everything which the Lord told Moses in Exod 29 appears in Lev 8.⁴⁰ This is of importance to the current study because two pieces of information that were keys to understanding *millē' yād* in Exod 29 are missing in Lev 8. First, Lev 8 does not begin with any statement explicitly identifying the purpose of the chapter. Thus the material within Lev 8 is understood as referring to priestly ordination primarily by analogy to Exod 29. Second, v.33 is the only occurrence of the phrase *millē' yād* in Lev 8. Thus there are no other occurrences with which to compare usage and meaning.

As a result, when it comes to understanding the meaning of *millē' yād* in Lev 8:33 we are left with two options. First, we can disregard its sister-passage in Exod 29 and seek to understand it solely within its context of Lev 8. Second, we can understand it within its context of Lev 8 and in light of its sister-passage in Exod 29.

The first leads to an occasion where understanding *millē' yād* as an idiom meaning “to ordain a priest” not only makes sense, but also supports the flow of the passage. The position of the verse at the end of the ritual gives it a sense of concluding and summarizing all that preceded it. Therefore, *millē' yād* here would refer to the overall effect of the ritual, a sense of finality.

⁴⁰ On the relation of Exod 29 and Lev 8, see Durham, *Exodus*, 393-394; Hartley, *Leviticus*, 108-110; Klingbeil, *Comparative Study*, 104-107; Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 545-549.

The second would agree entirely with the analysis of the first if not for the similarity between Lev 8:33 and Exod 29:35. Because Exod 29 attests three other occurrences of *millē' yād* as well as an introductory statement in v.1, identifying everything as part of the ordination ritual, it may be arguable that the interpretation of Lev 8:33 is not as simple as the first would suggest. Rather, it may be possible to see the complications of Exod 29:35 as also being the complications of Lev 8:33.

Leviticus 16:32

The context of Lev 16:32 is similar to that of Exod 29:29: inheriting the office of high priest. “The priest made atonement, the one whom he will anoint (*'āšer-yimšah 'ōtô*) and whom he will fill his hand (*wa 'āšer yēmallē' 'et-yādô*) in order to function as a priest (*lēkahnēn*) in the stead of his father; he will wear (*wēlābaš*) the garments of linen, the holy garments.” It is clear that, in order to succeed the high priest, the priest had to be anointed and have his hand filled. Only then could he function as high priest. Moreover, the syntax seems to make it clear that they were two separate acts.

If *millē' yād* is understood as meaning “to ordain a priest,” then anointing would appear to be understood as distinct from ordaining. There is no inherent problem with this, and indeed it is a viable option. In order for a priest to function as a high priest, they would first need to be ordained as a high priest. However, there could be a difficulty. If Lev 16:32 was written at all with Exod 29 in mind, then one needs to consider the complications inherent within Exod 29:29 (mentioned above).

Leviticus 21:10

Leviticus 21:10a reads: “The priest, exalted among his brothers, who will have anointing oil poured (*yūṣaq*) upon his head and his hand filled (*ūmillē’ et-yādô*) in order to wear (*libōš*) the garments.” Similar to both Exod 29:29 and Lev 16:32, this verse refers to becoming a high priest. Another similarity is the juxtaposition of anointing, here identified as pouring, and hand-filling (*millē’ yād*).⁴¹ While the explicit purpose here is not “to function as a priest” (*lēkakhēn*), the context suggests the garments are those of the high priest which a normal priest had to be ordained in order to wear. Thus the context is one of ordination. As such, understanding *millē’ yād* as an idiom meaning “to ordain a priest” does work in this verse. However, similar to Lev 16:32, if this verse was written with Exod 29 in mind, then one needs to consider the complications inherent within Exod 29:29 (mentioned above).⁴²

Numbers 3:3

Unlike in Exod 29:29; Lev 16:32; and Lev 21:10, the juxtaposing of anointing and hand-filling here do not serve the purpose of ordaining high priests. “These are the names of the sons of Aaron, the anointed priests (*hakkōhānīm hammēšūhīm*), whom he filled their hand (*millē’ yādām*) in order to function as priests (*lēkakhēn*).” Here the purpose is

⁴¹ According to Exod 29:7 and Lev 8:12 the anointing of Aaron as high priest consisted first of the pouring (*yāṣaq*) of the anointing oil and then of the anointing (*māšah*) with anointing oil. Thus, while Exod 29:29 mentions anointing (*māšah*) and Lev 21:10 mentions pouring (*yāṣaq*), it should be noted that they appear in parallel construction in Exod 29:7 and Lev 8:12.

⁴² It is interesting to note the syntax does not necessitate anointing and hand-filling as two separate acts. It is grammatically possible that hand-filling was a result of the anointing. However, it is equally grammatically possible that both anointing and hand-filling are to be understood as separate and distinct things.

to simply function as normal priests. There are some unique dynamics in this verse. Mention of anointing is done parenthetically, giving the sense of having previously taken place. The result is that the hand-filling seems to be what enabled them to serve as priests. As such, understanding *millē' yād* here as an idiom for “to ordain a priest” seems ideal. The anointed priests were ordained in order to function as priests.

Judges 17:5, 12

According to Judg 17:5, “The man Micah had a temple (*bēt 'ēlōhîm*). He made an ephod and teraphim, and he filled the hand (*wayyēmallē' 'et-yad*) of one of his sons, who served as his priest (*wayyēhî-lô lēkōhēn*).” Everything in this verse leads to priestly ordination. In possession of a temple and cultic paraphernalia, the only thing Micah lacked was a priest. Apparently lacking other options, Micah filled the hand of one of his sons. Then, in v.12, when a Levite becomes available, Micah either replaced his son or gave him a partner: “Micah filled the hand (*wayyēmallē' 'et-yad*) of the Levite, and the young man served as his priest (*wayyēhî-lô lēkōhēn*) for Micah; and he was in the house of Micah.” The transformation of his son and the Levite into priests is the embodiment of ordination.⁴³ Here *millē' yād* appears to be what triggered that transformation. As such, a meaning such as “to ordain a priest” would fit nicely with this usage of *millē' yād*.

⁴³ An alternative analysis is to be had in light of Judg 18:4. There, the Levite identifies his relation to the Micah of Judg 17 thus: “And he [the Levite] said to them [the Danites] ‘Micah did thus and thus to me, and he hired me (*wayyiškērēnî*), and I served as his priest (*wā' ēhî-lô lēkōhēn*).” Nowhere does the phrase *millē' yād* appear. And yet, the Levite explicitly mentions he was hired and had been serving as Micah’s priest. Prior to serving, he would have had to first become his, which could be marked by the phrase *wā' ēhî-lô lēkōhēn*. Save being the first person form, this phrase is identical to the narrator’s depiction of the Levite serving as Micah’s priest in 17:12, which is in the third person: *wayyēhî-lô hanna' ar lēkōhēn*. Thus, by analogy, it might be better to view ordination

1 Kings 13:33

One of the many evils leveled against Jeroboam is the following: “After this thing, Jeroboam did not turn from his evil way, but he [re]turned and made for the people priests (*wayya ‘ás kōhănē*) for the high places, whosoever desired he [Jeroboam] filled his [whosoever] hand (*yěmallē’ ‘et-yādô*) and he [whosoever] became a priest (*wîhî kōhănē*) for the high places” (1 Kings 13:33).

It is clear from the verse that priests are being made. As such, ordination almost certainly took place. The organization of the verse suggests that the second part, (“whosoever desired, he filled his hand and he became a priest”) is either an explanation or an elaboration of the first part (“made for the people priests”). While the first part simply states that Jeroboam made priests (*‘ásâ kōhēn*), the second part elaborates by stating that Jeroboam first filled their hands (*millē’ yād*) and then they became priests (*hāyâ kōhēn*). If *millē’ yād* is here understood as an idiom meaning “to ordain a priest,” then the second part would effectively say “after Jeroboam ordained them, they became priests.” This understanding of *millē’ yād* fits the context seamlessly.

2 Chronicles 13:9

Akin to 1 Kgs 13:33, 2 Chr 13:9 juxtaposes the making of priests (*‘ásâ kōhēn*) and the hand-filling of priests (*millē’ yād*): “Have you not forced out the priests of the

denoted by this phrase, *hāyâ-lô lēkōhēn*, as opposed to *millē’ yād*. This is especially the case when it is noted that the Levite does not mention that Micah filled his hand, despite explicitly mentioning being hired, likely referring to Micah’s offer in 17:10, and serving as a priest, corresponding to 17:12. Additionally, *hāyâ + lē-* can mean “to become” (see Ronald J. Williams, *Williams’ Hebrew Syntax* [3d ed.; rev. and enl. John C. Beckman; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010], §278).

Lord, the sons of Aaron and the Levites? And [do you not] make for yourselves priests like the people of the lands (*wattāššâ lākem kōhānîm*)? Any who comes to you to fill his hand (*lēmāllē' yādô*) with a young bull and seven rams, he will be[come] a priest (*wēhāyâ kōhēn*) to those who are not gods.” Besides the use of rhetorical questions, the main difference between 1 Kgs 13:33 and 2 Chr 13:9 is the explicit mention of what the hand was filled with—which has no apparent effect on the result, for the individual still becomes a priest.⁴⁴ As such, a meaning of “to ordain a priest” for *millē' yād* also fits this context seamlessly.

Exodus 32:29

Addressing the Levites in Exod 32:29, “Moses said ‘Fill your hand (*mil'û yedkem*) today to the Lord—for each man has with his son and with his brother—so as to set upon you a blessing today.’” The phrase *mil'û yedkem*, here translated as a *qal* imperative, can also be translated as a *pi'el* perfect, which, if taken impersonally, would render: “someone filled your hand,” or “your hand has been filled.”⁴⁵ As a *qal*

⁴⁴ While it is not important for the argument, the animals with which the hands are filled is of interest for comparative purposes with the other seventeen occurrences of the phrase *millē' yād*. Though not explicitly stated, mention of a young bull and seven rams seems to elicit sacrificial imagery. However, the only other place sacrifice is mentioned in direct relation to *millē' yād* is in Exod 29:33; though, depending on how one chooses to read it, Exod 29:9 may also be of interest. In Exod 29 the animal count is different. On the first day, one bull and two rams were required, which is less than the one bull and seven rams required here in 2 Chr 13:9. If the sacrifices were to be done every day for seven days, as Exod 29:35 may suggest, then the animal count is too low.

⁴⁵ See Propp, *Exodus 19-40*, 546, 563. Some have suggested taking the verb as a *qal* perfect (see Durham, *Exodus*, 436). However, to do so would first require altering the Masoretic vocalization, which I do not find necessary—especially when it can already be read as a *pi'el* perfect.

Translated literally, the *pi'el* perfect would be rendered “they filled your hand.” This may refer back to the sons and brothers just killed, and how their blood literally

imperative, it would be the only one of the eighteen occurrences of this phrase in either the *qal* or the imperative. Thus it may make more sense for it to be read as a *pi'el* perfect. In fact, this seems to be the way the Septuagint understands it, for there it is translated as an aorist active indicative.⁴⁶

Because *millē' yād* is generally understood as meaning “to ordain a priest,” there is a tendency to see the blessing the Levites were to receive as the priesthood, and thus this verse as an etiology for the Levites becoming priests.⁴⁷ However, there are a couple problems. First, the blessing is nowhere explicitly identified as the priesthood, nor as anything else. Second, not all Levites are ordained to the priesthood—only the descendants of Aaron. As such, there should be enough reasonable doubt concerning the identity of the blessing to reevaluate the meaning of *millē' yād* in this verse. Since priests,

filled the Levites' hands. However, by translating it as an impersonal *pi'el* perfect, such a gruesome interpretation can still be had, but is not explicit.

⁴⁶ The Septuagint translates nearly half of the occurrences of *millē' yād* into the aorist active indicative; here using the same exact form as in 2 Chr 29:31 (see Appendix 1).

⁴⁷ See Noth, *Exodus*, 250-51; Snijders and Fabry, *TDOT* 8:305; George Buchanan Gray, *Sacrifice in the Old Testament: Its Theory and Practice* (New York: KTAV Publishing House, 1971), 249-50; Cody, *Priesthood*, 153-54; Propp, *Exodus 19-40*, 563-64.

In addition to being at the heart of the etiology, G. B. Gray, Cody and Propp see double-meanings and, in the case of Propp, even irony in the use of *millē' yād* in this context. G. B. Gray identifies the phrase with both the technical installation to the priesthood as well as to the filling of the hand with a weapon (*Sacrifice*, 249-50). Cody sees the Levites being filled with “human spoils of justice” and at the same time are bound with the “assumption of the priesthood” (*Priesthood*, 154). The irony for Propp is that, in addition to priesthood ordination, “the Levites are to fill their hands—with the avenging sword and with their brethren's gore” (*Exodus 19-40*, 564).

On the other hand, while Durham acknowledges an ordination took place, he seems to hesitate to consider this an etiology for the priesthood: “The loyalty of such men...provided in itself a kind of ordination to Yahweh's service that resulted in a blessing, but it is not likely that this ‘ordination,’ despite the use of the $\text{ר} + \text{מלל}$ ‘fill + hand’ idiom to describe it, was regarded as ordination to the ministry of worship in Yahweh's Presence described, for example, in Exod 29” (Durham, *Exodus*, 431-32).

priesthood, and priestly duties are all absent from this text, any association between *millē' yād* and priestly ordination is thoroughly implicit. As such, it could just as easily refer to priestly ordination as not.

1 Chronicles 29:5

After delineating everything he had provided for the construction of the temple, King David asked the people what they will contribute: “Who will make a voluntary offering (*mitnaddēb*) so as to fill their hand (*lēmāllō'wt yādō*) to the Lord?” (1 Chr 29:5b). His question was answered by the leaders and people of Israel providing a combined offering far greater than that which David himself had provided (vv.6-8). Afterwards, all those who gave willingly then rejoiced because they had given willingly (v.9). All of this suggests the context of this passage revolves around personal devotion. As such, the appearance of *millē' yād* is interesting.

If understood as an idiom meaning “to ordain a priest,” David would thus be asking “who will make a voluntary offering so as to ordain themselves priests to the Lord?” As has been previously noted, there are inherent problems associated with individuals ordaining themselves. Additionally, there is no mention of priests or priesthood, much less priestly ordination. Thus, what would be the purpose of being ordained? Whatever it was, it must fit within the context of personal devotion.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ According to Snijders and Fabry, such personal devotion provided a form of consecration: “Who now also wishes to increase his own ‘strength’ so as to be capable for the service of Yahweh? Who now wishes to ‘make his heart whole’ (*šālēm*) for God (v. 9)? Understood in this way, 1 Ch. 29:5 is also speaking of a kind of ‘consecration’” (*TDOT* 8:305).

2 Chronicles 29:31

After spearheading the cleansing of the temple and the reinstatement of proper temple worship, “Hezekiah answered and said “Now you have filled your hand (*millē’tem yedkem*) to the Lord. Come near and bring sacrifices and thank-offerings to the house of the Lord.” And the congregation brought sacrifices and thank-offerings, and all who were willing of heart brought burnt offerings” (2 Chr 29:31). The question arises, who was Hezekiah speaking to? The answer to this question is important, if not essential, to properly understanding the usage of *millē’ yād* in this verse.

First, Hezekiah could have been addressing the congregation. This is supported by the following verses, which describe the congregation as bringing so many animals that the priests are overwhelmed (vv.31b-34). However, such an understanding poses problems with *millē’ yād*. If we understand the phrase as an idiom meaning “to ordain a priest,” then Hezekiah said they have now ordained themselves priests. Yet, the only thing they were said to have done was worship (vv.28-29). Furthermore, they are not said to ever act as priests. In fact, when they bring their offerings, the text explicitly states it was the priests and Levites who prepare and offer them (v.34). Additionally, the wording of Hezekiah’s address suggests they would have ordained themselves, which, as previously mentioned, is problematic. Therefore, should Hezekiah be addressing the congregation, the common understanding of “to ordain a priest” does not seem to be evoked here.

Second, it is possible that Hezekiah first addressed the Levites, and then turned his attention to the congregation. Prior to this short speech, Hezekiah had last spoken to the Levites in v.30. As such, when Hezekiah says “Now you have filled your hand to the

Lord,” he could have been addressing them. Then, turning to the congregation, he could have invited them to bring sacrifices. This interpretation would alleviate the burden of associating *millē’ yād* with the congregation. However, it does not eradicate all the issues surrounding *millē’ yād* if it is understood as an idiom meaning “to ordain a priest.” First, as noted in the discussion on Exod 32:29, Levites are nowhere ordained in biblical literature. Second, they were already functioning by the time Hezekiah spoke, thereby suggesting that if they could be ordained they would have already been ordained, else what were they doing officiating in their office? Third, the Levites would still bear the same burden as the congregation in that they would have ordained themselves.

However, it should be noted that v.34 mentions that, because not all the priests had sanctified themselves, the Levites had to temporarily help the priests prepare and offer the animals which the congregation brought. Though Hezekiah’s speech does not seem to have foreseen this, it is possible to connect Hezekiah’s use of *millē’ yād* with the role the Levites play in v.34. If this is considered, one should realize that the elevated role of the Levites was only temporary. Thus, while such temporary ordination is possible, it is not likely probable.

It should be noted that Jacob Myers provides a third possibility. Understanding the phrase *millē’ yād* as “a technical term for consecration of the priests,” he surmises that “Hezekiah was addressing the priests, exhorting them to carry on their functions now that the temple was dedicated.”⁴⁹ This would thus be similar to the above possibility of Hezekiah having first spoken to the Levites, then to the congregation. Since Hezekiah had commanded the priests to offer the burnt offerings in v.27, he had recently spoken to

⁴⁹ Jacob M. Myers, *II Chronicles* (AB 13; New York: Doubleday, 1965), 169.

them. Moreover, his proximity was likely no close to the Levites than to the priests.

However, this proposition poses two problems. First, similar to the Levites, at least some of the priests were already functioning as priests prior to Hezekiah's statement. Second, similar to both the congregation and the Levites, the priests would have ordained themselves.

In short, no matter what audience Hezekiah is speaking to, there are problems associated with understanding *millē' yād* as an idiom meaning "to ordain a priest." If one allowed the syntax to divide Hezekiah's speech between two audiences, then *millē' yād* could refer to a temporary ordination. However, it would seem most preferable to simply realize that understanding *millē' yād* as associated with priestly ordination is here problematic.⁵⁰

2 Kings 9:24

In a coup against Joram, "Jehu filled his hand (*millē' yādō*) with a bow and struck Joram between the arms, and the arrow went out from his heart, and he collapsed in his

⁵⁰ Noting that this idiom is most often used in priestly contexts, Sara Japhet states that in both 1 Chr 29:5 and 2 Chr 29:31 the phrase "has lost its concrete sense and is used metaphorically" as "you have made a pledge to the Lord, and have thus consecrated yourselves" (Sara Japhet, *I & II Chronicles* [OTL; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1993]: 929-30). Martin Noth says something similar in that the use of the phrase in 1 Chr 29:5 and 2 Chr 29:31 demonstrate that the chronicler "no longer knew the actual meaning" (Noth, *Laws in the Pentateuch*, 231 n.6). The problem with Noth's observation is that he claims "the expression is still used in its technical sense" in 2 Chr 13:9 (Noth, *Laws in the Pentateuch*, 231 n.6), thus suggesting it would have been purposefully incorrectly used in 1 Chr 29:5 and 2 Chr 29:31. As for Japhet's note, it is important to realize that by nature an idiom has no concrete sense, but is always used metaphorically, thus she deconstructs her own assertion.

chariot” (2 Kgs 9:24).⁵¹ Jehu is a warrior, not a priest. As such, it is hard to read priestly ordination into this verse. Acknowledging this difficulty, traditional translations render this occurrence of *millē’ yād* as Jehu “drew his bow” (NJPS, NIV) or “drew his bow with all his strength” (NRSV, also KJV).⁵² Thus, priestly ordination does not seem to be at play in this verse.⁵³ Furthermore, Jehu fills his own hand, which, as discussed, is highly

⁵¹ Cogan and Tadmor, citing an oral communication with Israel Eph‘al, draw a connection with Zech 9:13. On account of the proximity of the verb *millē’* with *qešet*, and in comparison with the Akkadian lexical entry *qaštu malītu*, a theoretical idiom is proposed: *millē’ haqqešet bēyad*, “he filled [i.e. nocked] his bow” (see Mordechai Cogan and Hayim Tadmor, *II Kings* (AB 11; New York: Doubleday, 1988), 110). Similarly, on analogy of 2 Sam 23:7, J. Gray notes “we must consider it possible that *millē’ yādō* may simply mean ‘he seized’ or ‘armed himself’” (J. Gray, *I & II Kings*, 547). While both these analogies fit conceptually with the idea of how Jehu obviously used his bow, neither attest the phrase *millē’ yād*. Thus, while they support the traditional, and contextual, interpretation of this verse, they do not assist in providing an understanding of the use of *millē’ yād*.

⁵² Klingbeil identifies the use of *millē’ yād* in 2 Kgs 9:24 as “an idiomatic expression conveying the idea of putting one’s entire strength into a specific act as in the case of Jehu’s drawing of his bow” (Klingbeil, *Comparative Study*, 287). He then notes in a footnote that “Snijders and Fabry (1984:884) argue that while Jehu “filled his hand with the bow” (literally), this refers to the fact that he filled his strength, extended by his bow” (Klingbeil, *Comparative Study*, 287 n.689).

⁵³ In an effort to conform this verse to the idea that *millē’ yād* refers to priestly ordination, Snijders and Fabry (*TDOT* 8:305) claim that warriors involved in military service were consecrated in a special way:

Warriors are in a special way consecrated to the Lord and “sacred.” 2 K. 9:24 does not relate that Jehu “took his bow into hand,” but rather that he “filled” his hand “with the bow” and shot Joram. This is likely saying that Jehu filled up his *yād*, i.e., his strength or might, complemented with a weapon. Now he is removed from normal life and “consecrated” to a superhuman commission (cf. 2 S. 23:7: the worthless are like thorns which one does not touch with one’s hand; rather let one “fill” [add: *yād*, his had] with iron). The weapon gives him strength and ability; through it he is full of power.

One problem is that this would be the only occurrence of a warrior being consecrated with this idiom. Additionally, *millē’ yād* refers to Jehu and his bow, not Jehu and war—not to mention, the context is not so much that of war, but of a very violent but quick

problematic. Therefore, a meaning other than “to ordain a priest” should be preferred for *millē’ yād* in this occurrence.

Ezekiel 43:26

The last of the eighteen occurrences to be discussed is Ezek 43:26. “Seven days they [the priests] will make atonement for the altar (*yěkappěrû ’et-hammizbēah*), and they will cleanse it (*wěṭihārû ’ōtô*), and they will fill its hand (*ûmill’û yādô*).”⁵⁴ Here an altar is the object of *millē’ yād*. As such, a difficulty arises with the idiomatic meaning of “to ordain a priest.” Only people are ordained as priests, not objects. Perhaps for this reason the Septuagint attests a different suffix on the word “hand” (χείρ), shifting it from singular to plural: “Seven days they will atone for the altar, and they will cleanse it and they will fill their hands (πλήσουσιν χεῖρας αὐτῶν).” The result changes the object of *millē’ yād* from the altar to the officiating priests, something some translators pick up on.⁵⁵ Ostensibly, such a change would solve the problems associated with an object with no physical hands having its hand filled.

However, if *millē’ yād* is understood as meaning “to ordain a priest,” rather than alleviating the problem, such a change heightens it. First off, the priests would then be said to fill their own hands, thus ordaining themselves, which has already been identified as being problematic. Second, those who atone for and cleanse the altar are already priests and remain so **after** filling their own hands (see v.27). Since they do not enter into

coup. As such, the idea of this idiom referring to military consecration is somewhat wanting.

⁵⁴ The seven days reminds of Exod 29:35 and Lev 8:33.

⁵⁵ See Snijders and Fabry, *TDOT* 8:304; Zimmerli, *Ezekiel*, 430.

a new office, not only is ordination redundant and unnecessary, it did not likely happen (why by ordained for the same office twice?).

Conclusion

As can be seen from the above analyses, great difficulties arise if a univocal meaning of “to ordain a priest” is attached to *millē’ yād*. Thirteen occurrences of *millē’ yād* explicitly mention priests in the context of ordination. However, even within those, there are problems. As for the other five occurrences, defining *millē’ yād* as “to ordain a priest” makes little sense. These verses neither speak of priests, nor their ordination. This begs the necessity of a broader meaning; one which applies equally to all eighteen occurrences of the phrase.

CHAPTER IV

PROPOSING A SOLUTION

Five of the eighteen occurrences of *millē' yād* are in contexts removed from priestly ordination (Exod 32:29; 2 Kgs 9:24; Ezek 43:26; 1 Chr 29:5; 2 Chr 29:31). Given how few occurrences there are of this phrase in the Hebrew Bible, this is a considerable number, over one-quarter. And yet, these occurrences seem to have carried little weight when considering what the phrase *millē' yād* means. Rather, the meaning “to ordain a priest” has been nuanced to meet the needs of the various contexts. Thus, depending on the context and translation, it has been variously rendered as “devote,” “consecrate,” and even “draw with full strength.” However, what if nuancing went the other way? In other words, what if “to ordain a priest” is itself a specific nuance of a more general meaning?

Having thus demonstrated the existence of numerous complications within the eighteen occurrences of the phrase *millē' yād*, it seems necessary that a new basic meaning be proposed. Rather than automatically assuming an idiomatic meaning of “to ordain a priest,” we will begin by looking at the constituent words of the Hebrew phrase *millē' yād*. Based upon this analysis, a new basic meaning is proposed. Support for this meaning will be provided through the Septuagint as well as the Akkadian parallel, *qātam mullûm*.

millē'

The verb *mālē'* occurs as both a transitive and intransitive verb. Thus, in the *qal*, it can mean either “to fill” or “to be full.” Among the various meanings of the *pi'el* are factitive and intensifying. As a factitive, *millē'* would refer to filling something. The *pi'el* can also be used to intensify the meaning of the *qal*. Thus, rather than simply filling something, an intensifying *pi'el* would seem to connote the idea of completely filling something. This intensifying meaning is further supported by the fact that one of the ways the Septuagint translates *millē'* is with *τελειόω* (“to bring to completeness”).⁵⁶ The above focus on the *pi'el* is due to the fact that seventeen, if not all eighteen, occurrences of *millē' yād* attest the verb in the *pi'el*.⁵⁷

Specifically, the verb *mālē'* is used to express both temporal and spatial aspects. When the verb is used temporally, it denotes a completion of a particular period of time. For example, when Rebekah’s “days to deliver were full” (*wayyimlē'â*; Gen 25:24); when David’s “days are full, [he] lies down with [his] ancestors” (*yimlē'û*; 2 Sam 7:12); when the days of the Nazarite vow are full (*mēlō't*; Num 6:5, 13); when days of the parturient’s purification are full (*mēlō't*; Lev 12:4, 6).

When used spatially, the verb attests things being filled by both concrete and abstract things. Regarding the concrete, bags are filled with grain (*wayyēmal'û*; Gen 42:25); vessels are filled with oil (*kimlō't*; 2 Kgs 4:6); houses can be full of people (*mālē'*; Judg 16:27) or locusts (*ûmāl'û*; Exod 10:6); and rivers can be full up and over

⁵⁶ Delling, “*τελειόω*,” *TDNT* 8:79-80. Delling also provides such renderings as “to make perfect” and “to make free from stain.”

⁵⁷ As mentioned above, *mil'û* in Exod 32:29 can be either a *qal* imperative or a *pi'el* perfect (see Propp, *Exodus 19-40*, 546, 563).

their banks (*mālē'*; Josh 3:15). At times, concrete realities can be expressed hyperbolically, such as in Jer 16:18 where the land is said to be full of idols (*māl'û*).

Abstractly, “the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord” (*māl'â*; Isa 11:9); “the earth is full of violence” (*māl'â*; Gen 6:13); “the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle” (*mālē'*; Exod 40: 34, 35) and the temple (*mālē'*; Ezek 43:5); “the earth was full of his [the Lord’s] praise” (*māl'â*; Hab 3:3); and the Lord “filled Zion with judgment and righteousness” (*millē'*; Isa 33:5).

Of particular interest for the current study are those occurrences where body parts of people, or, at times, the entire person, are said to be filled. For example, wicked peoples’ “right hands are full of bribes” (*māl'â*; Ps 26:10), whereas the Lord’s “right hand is full of righteousness” (*māl'â*; Ps 48:10 [11]). Concerning his enemies, the Lord is petitioned to “fill their faces with shame” (*mallē'*; Ps 83:16 [17]). The Lord tells Israel, “Your hands are full of blood” (*mālē'û*; Isa 1:15), and says Nebuchadnezzar “filled his belly with my delights” (*millâ*; Jer 51:34).

In regards to filling the whole person, Jeremiah, addressing the Lord says, “you have filled me with indignation” (*millē'tānî*; Jer 15:17). On the other hand, the Lord, speaking of Bezalel, says, “I have filled him (*wā'āmallē'*) with a divine spirit; with wisdom, understanding, knowledge, and all work” (Exod 31:3; see also Exod 35:31). Elsewhere the Lord is said to fill individuals with the “spirit of wisdom” (*millē'tîw*; Exod 28:3) and with a “wise-heart” (*millē'*; Exod 35:35). On one occasion, an individual is said to be “full [*wayyimmālē'*] of wisdom, understanding, and knowledge” (1 Kgs 7:14).⁵⁸

⁵⁸ While the language matches what was said of Bezalel in Exod 31:3 and 35:31, here the Lord is not identified as the one doing the filling; though the *nip'al* may signify a divine

Regardless of who is doing the filling, it is evident that when people or body parts are filled, it is frequently with a quality of some sort (e.g. shame, righteousness, wisdom). Other times it is with something that could be literal (e.g., delights or blood), but is quite likely functioning hyperbolically and thus more figuratively. In short, people and body parts are usually only filled (*mālē*) in figurative terms.⁵⁹

yād

There are four important syntactic observations concerning the word *yād* as it appears in the phrase *millē yād* which need to first be highlighted. First, whether or not

passive by which the Lord is supposed to be intrinsically understood as having been the one to fill the individual.

⁵⁹ This figurative style also appears in Akkadian literary texts when an individual is said to be filled (using the Akkadian cognate *malû*). For example, in the Enūma Eliš, the following is said of Marduk (the edition of the Enūma Eliš used in this paper is Phillippe Talon, *The Standard Babylonian Creation Myth: Enūma Eliš* [SAACT 4; Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2005]; these lines are from p.36):

ibnīšūma ^d*Ea abāšu*
^d*Damkina ummāšu ḥaršassu*
īteniḳma širrit ^d*Ištar*
tārītu ittanūšu pulḫāta ušmalli

Ea, his father, created him
 Damkina, his mother, gave birth to him
 He sucked the teat of Ishtar
 The nurse who raised him had him filled with fearsomeness (I 83-86).

Similarly, in a prayer to Marduk, extolling his virtues and attributes, the following is stated:

^d*Damgalnunna namrirrī lamassāka ušmallī*

Damgalnunna filled your appearance with awe-inspiring luminosity. (*AfO* 19 62:41)

(See W. G. Lambert, “Three Literary Prayers of the Babylonians,” *AfO* 19 [1959-60]: 62. See also CAD 10.1, s.v. *malû*, 189; 11.1, s.v. *namrirrū*, 238.)

yād is preceded by the direct object marker, *’et*,⁶⁰ it seems to always appear as the direct object of the verb *millē’*. Second, *yād* always follows *millē’*. Third, *yād* always appears singular, even when the subject is plural.⁶¹ Fourth, *yād* never appears disembodied, as the owner is always identified either by name or pronominal suffix. The first two observations are what distinguishes the phrase *millē’ yād* from other occurrences where *mālē’* and *yād* are juxtaposed, but where *yād* precedes *mālē’*.⁶² The fourth, and last, observation is a springboard to understanding the nature and meaning of the Hebrew word *yād*.

It is one thing to note that *yād* never appears disembodied in occurrences of the phrase *millē’ yād*; it is another thing to realize that, in the roughly 1600 occurrences in the Hebrew Bible, except when being used in prepositional phrases, *yād* only rarely occurs disembodied. This suggests an intimate connection between *yād* and its owner. Indeed, few things are as personal as an individual’s hands. From the eleventh week of gestation, hands are a part of human identity.⁶³ Once born, it takes no training for infants

⁶⁰ Because it is inconsistently used, nothing conclusive can be drawn from either the presence or absence of the direct object marker. Those with *’et* are: Exod 28:41; 29:29, 33; Lev 8:33; 16:32; 21:10; Judg 17:5, 12; 1 Kgs 13:33. Those without *’et* are: Exod 29:9, 35; 32:29; Num 3:3; 2 Kgs 9:24; Ezek 43:26; 1 Chr 29:5; 2 Chr 13:9; 29:31; see also Appendix 1.

⁶¹ This may provide strong reason for understanding *millē’ yād* as a stock phrase.

⁶² There are seven verses where *mālē’* and *yād* are juxtaposed within five words of each other. Five refer to the fulfilling of oaths, in which the hand is an agent, not an object (1 Kgs 8:15, 24; Jer 44:25; 2 Chr 6:4, 15). In the other two, the hand is the subject rather than the object (Isa 1:15; Song 5:14). Interestingly, six of these seven are listed by Klingbeil as among his 25 occurrences of the idiom *millē’ yād*; the sole exception being Song 5:14 (see Klingbeil, *Comparative Study*, 286-87).

⁶³ According to Heidi Murkoff and Sharon Mazel, *What to Expect When You’re Expecting* (4th ed., New York: Workman Publishing, 2008), paddle-like hands actually begin to form at seven weeks (p. 151). By eleven weeks, fingernail and toenail beds “are

to know how to grasp a mother's finger with their hand. Before long children are crawling on their hands and knees. Next, they begin to pull themselves up to a standing position with their hands. After that, they begin to walk, at which point nothing is safe from their inquisitive hands. As children continue to grow, it is by means of their hands that they interact with the world around them.⁶⁴ Thus, the hand comes to denote much more than just the literal, physical appendage at the end of an arm. Likewise, Hebrew *yād* connotes several meanings derived from the nature, qualities, and functions of the hand.⁶⁵

The familiar placement of the hand at the side of the body is, no doubt, the reason for the derived meaning of "side."⁶⁶ Hebrew *yād* occasionally applies this spatial relationship between the hand and the body to other entities. For example, paths (*'al-yād derek*; 2 Sam 15:2), wagon tracks (*lěyad-mā 'āgal*; Ps 140:6 [5 Eng]), gates (*yād hašša 'ar*; 1 Sam 4:18; 18:4; Prov 8:3), nations (*'al-yād 'ašdôd*; Josh 15:46; see also Num 34:3; 2 Chr 21:16), rivers (*'al-yād hayyē 'ôr*; Exod 2:5; see also Num 13:29; Deut 2:37), and animals (*'al-yēdēhem*; Job 1:14).

Before the age of electricity and advanced technology, work was done with the hands. With regard to this, Edouard Dhorme states that, "Pour les Akkadiens, comme

forming on individual fingers and toes, having separated recently from the webbed hands and feet of just a few weeks ago" (p. 171).

⁶⁴ This is perhaps nowhere better understood than in an agrarian society where the soil is worked, plants are tended, and fruit is harvest by means of the hand.

⁶⁵ The metaphorical use of *yād* has been studied extensively by Dhorme in *L'emploi métaphorique des noms de parties du corps en hébreu et en akkadien* (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1963).

⁶⁶ See, e.g., Dhorme, *L'emploi métaphorique*, 139; Houtman, *Exodus*, 1:24; A. S. van der Woude, "יָד *yād* hand," *TLOT* 2:499.

pour les Hébreux, la main est d’abord principe d’action.”⁶⁷ As such, it is not surprising that *yād* appears in conjunction with verbs of action describing work. For example, “every skillful woman spun with her hands” (*běyādēhā*; Exod 35:25a); “Abimelech took an axe in his hand (*běyādō*) and cut down a bundle of brushwood” (Judg 9:48a); and of the Lord it is sung, “the sea is his, for he made it; as for the dry land, his hands (*yādāyw*) formed it” (Ps 95:5). In fact, when speaking of work in general, the Hebrew Bible frequently utilizes the phrase *ma ‘āšēh yād* (lit., “the work of the hand;” e.g., Deut 2:7; Isa 60:21; Ps 90:17).

The link between work and the power demonstrated through work is, at times, a very thin and nearly indistinguishable line. As such, Cornelis Houtman states, “The hand is among body parts by which the strength concentrated in a person can be outwardly manifested. It is thus not surprising that יָד can have the metaphorical sense of ‘strength,’ ‘power.’”⁶⁸ Take Exod 14:31a for example: *wayyar’ yisrā’el ’et-hayyād haggēdōlā ’āšer ‘āšā YHWH bēmišrayim*. Translated literally, “Israel saw the great hand which the Lord used against Egypt.” However, in light of the work performed, and the frequent reference to the “strong hand” (*běyād ḥāzāqā*; Exod 3:19; 6:1; 13:3, 14, 16, 19; 32:11; Deut 4:34; Jer 32:21) required and used in bringing Israel out of Egypt, *yād* may be understood as referring to the power of the work performed. Thus, Exod 14:31a may be translated: “Israel saw the great power which the Lord wrought against Egypt.”

⁶⁷ Dhorme, *L’emploi métaphorique*, 144.

⁶⁸ Houtman, *Exodus*, 1:24. He goes on to say: “The possibility that people imagined יָד in a very concrete way cannot be excluded, however. Excavations have uncovered idols wielding axes, clubs, or spears in their raised right hand, or with simply their right hand raised. The deities are ready to strike as warriors.”

Many times throughout the Hebrew Bible, *yād* seems to denote power more than anything else. For example, in Josh 8, the men of the city of Ai are strategically drawn out of the city (vv.10-17). At this point, upon Joshua’s command, a portion of his army, who lay in hiding, enters the city and sets it on fire (vv.18-19). Verse 20 then reads:

When the men of Ai turned around and looked, the smoke of the city ascended to the heavens; and they had no hands to flee (*wēlō’-hāyâ bāhem yādayim lānūs*) this way or that, for the people who fled to the wilderness turned back upon the pursuers.

The literal translation of “hand” makes little sense in this passage. Rather, what *yād* seems to be conveying in this passage is an ability, or power, to flee. Since the men of Ai were not able to flee because they were hemmed in on all sides, it was not within their power to do so. Thus here *yād* appears to denote power.

Another example of *yād* referring to power is in Deut 32:26. “For the Lord will judge his people and he will have compassion upon his servants when he sees that their hand is gone (*kî-’āzlat yād*), and there are none left who are bound or who are free.” Unless dismemberment is being referred to, which is not likely, understanding *yād* literally as “hand” makes little sense in this verse. Whatever *yād* does refer to, its loss triggers compassion from the Lord. Context would suggest that what was lost was the ability to protect oneself. Thus the Lord says in v.38b, “Let them [the foreign gods Israel turned to] rise up and help you.” Similar to Josh 8:20, it makes sense to understand this occurrence of *yād* as referring to power. When Israel is completely powerless, then the Lord comes in to save the day and deliver his people.

According to Isa 59:1, “the hand of the Lord is not too short (*qāṣrâ yad-YHWH*) to save, nor his ear too heavy to hear.” This verse seems to be harkening back to the Exodus tradition, where the Lord brought Israel out by means of a “strong hand” (*bēyād*

ḥāzāqā; Exod 3:19; 6:1; 13:3, 14, 16, 19; 32:11; Deut 4:34; Jer 32:21), and thereby suggesting that *yād* is here, once again, referring to the power of the Lord.

Thus, when considering the examples given above, we may note that a meaning of “power” is a viable translation for the word *yād* in some contexts, especially when connected to an individual.

millû`îm

There is a close connection between the phrases *millē`yād* and *millû`îm*. In fact, Snijders and Fabry state: “For the interpretation of the notion of ‘hand filling’ it is important to consider what is said about what is called the *millu`îm* ram (Ex. 29:19-35).”⁶⁹ It is interesting to note how Klingbeil inverts this order of importance: “In order to understand the significance of the מלאים sacrifice, it would be important to investigate the idiom מלא יד, ‘fill the hand of,’ which appears 25 times in the OT.”⁷⁰ What is instantly obvious is the belief that better understanding of one will increase understanding of the other, which is more than enough reason to spend a couple pages discussing *millû`îm*.

The word *millû`îm* occurs fifteen times in the Hebrew Bible. Eleven of those occurrences are in the context of priestly ordination, specifically referring to a sacrifice (Exod 29:22, 26, 27, 31, 34; Lev 7:37; 8:22, 28, 29, 31, 33). The other four refer to the setting of stones in mounts (Exod 25:7; 35:9, 27; 1 Chr 29:2). While a dichotomy exists between these two contexts, the presence and uniqueness of this word to both would suggest an ostensible connection.

⁶⁹ Snijders and Fabry, *TDOT* 8:303.

⁷⁰ Klingbeil, *Comparative Study*, 286. See also Hartley who notices a visible connection between the rituals underlying these two phrases (*Leviticus*, 114).

The word itself appears to be an abstract masculine plural noun based on the *pi'el* of the verbal root *mālē'*.⁷¹ As such, its basic meaning revolves around the idea of “to fill.” Thus, when *millū'îm* is juxtaposed with stones, translators render it along the lines of “setting” or “inlaying.” The idea is that stones are filled into the special mounts made for them.⁷² Such a meaning makes sense in this context.

However, *millū'îm* is treated quite differently when it appears in contexts of priestly ordination. Rather than treat it as an abstract noun deriving from the verb *mālē'*, it is generally identified as an “abstract plural stemming from the expression *millē' yad*.”⁷³ Since *millē' yad* is commonly understood as an idiom meaning “to ordain” and often more specifically as “to ordain a priest,” *millū'îm* is thus rendered as “ordination.”

The problem hinted at above is that, depending upon context, *millū'îm* is effectively identified as two different words—one derived from the verb *mālē'*, and the other from the idiom *millē' yad*. This is possible, especially because of the dichotomy in meaning. However, if one looks at the similarities between the two contexts, and the use of *millū'îm* in both, the starkness of the ostensible dichotomy fades. When *millū'îm* marks the setting of stones, it is only in relation to the ephod of the high priest (Exod 25:7; 35:9, 27) or for the temple (1 Chr 29:2). Thus even outside of priestly ordination, *millū'îm* is used only in priestly contexts.

⁷¹ See Propp, *Exodus 19-40*, 452, 463.

⁷² See Klingbeil, *Comparative Study*, 286, 307; Propp, *Exodus 19-40*, 376, 439, 463.

⁷³ Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 527. See also Delcor, *TLOT* 2:665; Hartley, *Leviticus*, 113; Klingbeil, *Comparative Study*, 322; Levine, *Leviticus*, 53; Propp, *Exodus 19-40*, 463. Roland de Vaux identifies *millū'îm* as the “cognate noun” of *millē' yād* with the meaning of “investing a priest” in Exod 29 and Lev 8 (*Ancient Israel*, 346).

While the specific dictionary definitions of *millû 'îm* differ, there is a similarity to their function in the text. The ephod was not complete without the stones affixed to it. Even after the settings (*mišbēšâ*; see Exod 28:11, 13, 14, 25; 39:6, 13, 16, 18) were made, the ephod was not complete until those settings, and by extension, the ephod was filled (*millû 'îm*) with, and by, the stones.⁷⁴ On a similar note, the ordination of the to-be-priests was not complete until all of the sacrifices and incumbent rituals were completed. The third, and last sacrifice, was called the *millû 'îm*. This particular sacrifice is unique to the ordination of the priests, and several rites associated with priestly ordination require the “ram of *millû 'îm*” to first be sacrificed.⁷⁵ Thus, even though the to-be-priests could be washed, clothed, anointed, and both a sin and burnt offering could be performed; the requirements of the ordination could not be completed, or filled, without a *millû 'îm*. Indeed, according to Propp, “the ‘filling ram’ is the sacrifice by which priests are made.”⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Snijders and Fabry, *TDOT* 8:307 suggest the possibility that the use of the word *millû 'îm* may refer to spiritual strengthening and ordination. See also Klingbeil, *Comparative Study*, 286.

⁷⁵ These rites include the daubing of blood on the right ear, thumb and big toe of Aaron and his sons (v.20); the sprinkling of a mixture of altar blood and anointing oil upon them (v.21); the performance of a wave offering (vv.22ff); and then the cooking and eating of the *millû 'îm* offering (vv.31-34).

⁷⁶ *Exodus 19-40*, 463. This sacrifice does not appear to be a common type, and thus relates closely to its situation (Klingbeil, *Comparative Study*, 323). According to its order in Lev 7:37, it follows the most holy offering and precedes the less holy well-being offering. Therefore, it is neither the one nor the other; rather, it has aspects of both. As such, “its ambiguous state corresponds precisely to the ambiguous, liminal state of its priestly offerers” (Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 436). Because “it is a transitional offering...it corresponds to the transitional nature of its offerers” (Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 323; see also Klingbeil, *Comparative Study*, 289).

Additionally, it is not known whether this was to be a recurring sacrifice, or once for all time (see Klingbeil, *Comparative Study*, 216; Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 436).

Thus, in both contexts, whatever the definition, a *millū'îm* was required in order to complete, and thus fulfill the purpose at hand. In relation to priests, it would appear that “through the step-by-step rite of *millū'îm* ‘filling,’ the House of Aaron is raised to a higher level of sanctity and empowered to mediate between God and Israel.”⁷⁷

millē' yād

Before settling on an entirely idiomatic meaning of the phrase *millē' yād*, which is completely separate from either of the constituent parts, one should look at each of those constituent parts to see if a workable meaning can be derived from them and their metaphorical elements. As a *pi'el* verb, *mālē'* will bear either a factitive or intensifying meaning, thus rendering “to make full” or “to completely fill.” When referring to a human body or one of its individual parts, it is typically filled with something abstract. Due to the nature of the hand, *yād* is frequently used to denote power. In light of this, the phrase *millē' yād* can therefore mean “to fill the power of.” Since *yād* is never disembodied, the phrase thereby means “to fill the power of the specified person.”

In short, *millē' yād* may be best understood as an idiom meaning “to fill with power,” or, more succinctly, “to empower.” This is not a completely new idea, for Baruch Levine, William Propp, and few others have previously suggested this idea to varying degrees.⁷⁸ However, because they each maintain *millē' yād* appears solely in

⁷⁷ Propp, *Exodus 19-40*, 529.

⁷⁸ In regards to Num 3:3, Levine simply notes that “the formula *millē' yād* has a technical sense: ‘to appoint, empower’” (*Numbers 1-20*, 155). Propp states that “through the step-by-step rite of *millū'îm* ‘Filling,’ the House of Aaron is raised to a higher level of sanctity and empowered to mediate between God and Israel” (*Exodus 19-40*, 529). Snijders and Fabry identify the “ritual of hand-filling is a ritual of strengthening one’s efficacy as priest, of ‘full’ empowerment, of ‘filling’ the soul, rendering it capable of performing the

contexts of priestly ordination, they only applied this meaning to priestly contexts. Thus this study proposes to bring back that idea of empowerment, move it to the forefront (setting “to ordain a priest” as one of its nuances), and apply it to more than just priestly ordination contexts.

This meaning is more general than that of “to ordain a priest.” Indeed, to ordain someone is to empower them, but for the specific purpose of being able to officiate within a specific office. Thus, “to ordain a priest” is a legitimate nuance of this new, general meaning. While empowering has a wider application than just the ordination of priests, the fact it can be easily nuanced attests to the initial validity of this proposed solution.

Septuagint

This conclusion is strengthened by the fact that, when translating *millē*’, the Septuagint varies between three verbs: τελειόω, πληρόω, and πίμπλημι.⁷⁹ Each of these three verbs has a range of meanings. The verbs πληρόω and πίμπλημι have meanings that overlap in the sense of “to fill,” similar to Hebrew *mālē*’. Combined with τὰς χεῖρας, which not only has the literal meaning of hand, but also a metaphorical meaning of power

serve at the altar; the word *yāḏ* in this context is thus to be understood in the sense of ‘efficacy, power’” (*TDOT* 8:304). See also Houtman, *Exodus*, 1:26-27; Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit, Tremper Longman III, *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Downers Grove: IL, 1998), 362 (s.v. “Hand”).

⁷⁹ This is contra to Snijders and Fabry, *TDOT* 8:302, who states that the LXX does not translate with πίμπλημι or πληρόω but with τελειόω. Klingbeil also notes the incorrectness of their statement (see Klingbeil, *Comparative Study*, 287).

or strength,⁸⁰ and the Greek not only matches the Hebrew phrasing, but also the Hebrew meaning of “fill the hand,” or better, “fill the power.”

This possibility is heightened by the frequent use of the verb τελειόω to translate *mālē*. According to Delling, the verb τελειόω has a factitive meaning of bringing to completeness which the Septuagint renders as “to make perfect,” or “to make free from stain.”⁸¹ He goes on to identify the use of this verb within the idiom as emphasizing the individual’s ability to practice the cult.⁸² While this could envelope the meaning of ordination, it seems very much rooted in the idea of empowering. Contextually, this may be for practicing the cult, but the verb itself does not designate between cultic and non-cultic meanings. Thus the Septuagint also attests to the possibility and viability of the Hebrew idiom *millē*’ *yād* having a general meaning of “to empower.”

qātam mullûm

Additional support for this proposal comes from the Akkadian phrase *qātam mullûm*, which many scholars frequently parallel to the Hebrew phrase *millē*’ *yād*. A couple scholars even call it a cognate phrase.⁸³ While the verbs, *malû* and *mālē*’ are

⁸⁰ See Lohse, “χείρ,” *TDNT* 9:424-28.

⁸¹ See Delling, *TDNT* 8:79-80.

⁸² See Delling, *TDNT* 8:81. In line with this Klingbeil states: “This interpretation by the LXX translators would indicate an understanding of יָדָאֵלֵךְ that emphasizes the aspect of the act enabling the to-be-priest(s) to fulfill his duty adequately” (*Comparative Study*, 287). Snijders and Fabry come to a similar conclusion when referencing Lev 21:10, where the LXX omits reference to the hands: “This passage prompts us to think of a ritual whereby the priest is made suitable or qualified to exercise his office” (Snijders and Fabry, *TDOT* 8:302).

⁸³ Cody (*Priesthood*, 153 n.22) and Milgrom (*Leviticus 1-16*, 539) explicitly call the relationship cognate, though other scholars use language that could be pulled from a

cognate, the nouns are not etymologically connected. Conceptually, both *qātum* and *yād* mean “hand.” However, Akkadian *idum*, “arm,” is a more appropriate etymological cognate for *yād*.⁸⁴ Thus, even though the verbs *malû* and *mālē*’ are cognate, since the nouns are not, referring to the phrases as completely cognate is less than accurate. Still, this in no way negates the value of the parallel that exists between *qātum mullûm* and *millē*’ *yād*, both literally meaning “fill the hand.” One only needs to question the nature of that parallel.

Part of the problem is that many scholars, at least according to their writings, approach the relationship with the assumption that *millē*’ *yād* always refers to priestly ordination.⁸⁵ Some then attempt to utilize *qātum mullûm* to support this assertion. This, obviously, has the result of influencing their findings, rather than allowing the Akkadian phrase to speak for itself.

Thus, for example, Baruch Levine states the Akkadian is not as close a parallel as scholars have adduced, but that it is still close enough to be instructive.⁸⁶ However, it

thesaurus entry for “cognate.” For example, Mordechai Cogan (*I Kings* [AB 10; New York: Doubleday, 2001], 373) and Milgrom, in his *Numbers* commentary (*Numbers*, 300) identify the phrase as equivalent. Dhorme (*L’emploi Métaphorique*, 146) says the Hebrew phrase “correspond exactement” to the Akkadian. Zimmerli (*Ezekiel*, 435) identifies the phrase as a counterpart. Propp (*Exodus 19-40*, 452) says the phrases are parallel, whereas Levine (*Leviticus*, 205; *Numbers 1-20*, 155) states the phrases are not precise parallels but are still close enough to be instructive. Gary N. Knoppers (*I Chronicles 10-29* [AB 12a; New York: Doubleday, 2004], 946) claims the phrases to be similar, and both J. Gray (*I & II Kings*, 33) and Snijders and Fabry (*TDOT* 8:302) presuppose a relationship though never acknowledge just what it is.

⁸⁴ See Dhorme, *L’emploi métaphorique*, 138; Ackroyd and von Soden, “7,” *TDOT* 5:396-98.

⁸⁵ See Levine, *Leviticus*, 53; Levine, *Numbers 1-20*, 155; Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 538-39; Milgrom, *Numbers*, 15; Propp, *Exodus 19-40*, 452; Sabourin, *Priesthood*, 137.

⁸⁶ See Levine, *Leviticus*, 205 n.27 and Levine, *Numbers 1-20*, 155.

should be remembered that his view of the relationship is influenced by his belief that *millē' yād* only refers to priestly ordination. Therefore, because he does not find the Akkadian to overtly support this meaning of *millē' yād*, for him the relationship cannot be very close. On the other hand, Jacob Milgrom cites only a few Akkadian texts which he understands to suggest a connection between *qātam mullûm* and priestly ordination before concluding that *qātam mullûm* is a close parallel in full support of *millē' yād* referring to the ordination of priests.⁸⁷ Most other scholars fall somewhere between these two opinions.⁸⁸

If *qātam mullûm* is a parallel, close, or at least close enough, to be instructive, then an understanding of it should prove valuable in understanding the meaning of *millē' yād*. Thus an analysis of several texts attesting the phrase *qātam mullûm* will be provided so as to increase understanding of the nature and meaning of the phrase by itself and apart from biblical *millē' yād*.

The phrase, *qātam mullûm*, is used in a variety of ways in Akkadian. (A basic explanation of how the phrase *qātam mullûm* works is provided in the analysis of the first example.) The most frequent is in delivering someone into another's power, literally filling someone into the hands of someone else. An example can be found in the epilogue of the Code of Hammurabi, where a series of curses are requested from a variety of

⁸⁷ See Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 539. Milgrom actually says the Akkadian phrase is the "exact cognate phrase" to the Hebrew and that both mean "ordain, authorize (through a ceremony)." It should be noted that he is not necessarily equating the Akkadian phrase with the meaning "to ordain a priest." Rather, he is stating that because the Akkadian means "to ordain" generically, and, at times, does mean "to ordain a priest," then it is logical to assume that the Hebrew expression can also mean "to ordain a priest."

⁸⁸ For examples, see scholars listed in note 83.

deities to strike anyone who does not heed the stela. Among the curses, the following is requested of Ishtar:

šūāti ana qāt nakrišu limallišuma

As for him, may she fill him into the hand of his enemy (li 20-21)⁸⁹

While what follows in Hammurabi Code lines 22-23 provide a fairly clear explanation for the phrase *ana qāt mullûm* (“may she lead him bound to the land of his enemy”), it is important to first look at the phrase itself. In this instance, the verb is in the D-stem precativ, thereby asking the goddess to do something. The question is: what is the goddess being asked to do?

The basic meaning of the verb *malû* is “to fill.” Literally, “to fill” is to put something into something else. In this passage, the individual who does not heed the stela is to be filled into the hand of his enemy. Following a literal line of reasoning, any person who is literally placed in the hands of another will, literally, fill their hand(s); even newborn babies fill the average person’s hands. But the literal concept seems a little off the mark.

Similar to Hebrew *yād*, Akkadian *qātum* may be used to connote ideas and concepts derived from the functions and uses of the hand. Since the hand was the means of manipulating the world, it was seen as exhibiting power and control over the world.⁹⁰ Those two concepts work remarkably well in this passage, thus rendering, “As for him, may she fill him into the power of his enemy.”

⁸⁹ Martha T. Roth, *Law Collections from Mesopotamia and Asia Minor* (2d ed.; Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1997), 139. See also, Robert Francis Harper, *The Code of Hammurabi, King of Babylon* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1904), 106 where this text is numbered is xliv 20-21.

⁹⁰ See CAD 13, s.v. *qātu*, 183-98.

Furthermore, to fill something is more than just placing something into something else. It is to move something from one place, and deliver it to a new one. Thus lines 20-21 are to be understood: “As for him, may she deliver him to the power, or control, of his enemy.” This is exactly what lines 22-23 suggest. Together they read: “As for him, may she deliver him to the control of his enemy; may she lead him bound to the land of his enemy.”

The context of delivering into another’s power is also to be had in interpersonal correspondence. For example, in ARM 5 2 Yasmaḥ-Addu wrote to Išme-Dagan informing him of action taken after a land had been put in turmoil by a rebellion. Of particular interest are the following lines:

awīlû qaqqadātum ša mātam annītam idluḥu ilūka ana qātīka umallīšunūti

Your god has delivered the ring leaders who have caused a disturbance in this country into your control (lit. “he filled them into your hand”). (ARM 5 2: 5'-7')⁹¹

Rather than idly petitioning for a god to deliver the ring leaders, as is done in the Code of Hammurabi lines 20-21, Yasmaḥ-Addu took care of the matter himself. He mobilized a force and marched on the source of the problem. The result was some people taken captive and others killed.

The phrase is also to be found in prophetic utterances. Take, for example, some of what the goddess Annunitum tells Zimri Lim:

ina bīt Annunītim ša libbi ālim Aḥatum šuḥārat^d Dagan-Malik immaḥīma kām iqbī umami Zimri-Lim u šumma atta mišātanni anāku elīka aḥabbub nakrīka ana qātīka umalla u awīlī šarraqīya ašabbatma ana karāš^d Bēlet-ekallim akammissunūti

In the inner city temple of Annunitum, Aḥatum, a servant of Dagan-Malik, fell into a trance, saying: “Zimri-Lim, even if you treat me with contempt, I will love

⁹¹ See CAD 3, s.v. *dalāḥu*, 44; 10.1, s.v. *malû*, 187.

you.⁹² I will deliver your enemies into your control (lit. I will fill into your hand). I will seize those who stole from me and I will gather them in to the slaughter⁹³ of Bēlet-ekallim.” (ARM 10 8: 5-18)

By nature of prophecy, here the goddess Annunitum is promising Zimri-Lim that she will deliver his enemies into his power (lines 12-14). There appear to be no stipulations. As such, it is essentially a fact, similar to ARM 5 2, that has yet to come about.⁹⁴

While the delivering of one person into the power of somebody else may be the most frequent and common use of *qātam mullûm*, as suggested by the CAD,⁹⁵ it is not the only meaning attributed to the phrase. For example, a building inscription commissioned by Nabû-šum-imbi, describes the decision and plan made to restore a storehouse in Ezida. It then tells of an attack on the city which stops the work from progressing. After having successfully defended the city and built the storehouse, the inscription requests blessings from Nabû. One of the requested blessings is:

nuḥšu ... ḥegalla māda limallâ qātīšu

May he fill his hands with prosperity ... and much abundance. (BM 33428 iib 26)⁹⁶

⁹² Rather than *aḥabbub*, Durand reads *aḥabbuṣ*, which would render: “I massacre on your behalf” (LAPO 18 1138).

⁹³ There is some ambiguity surrounding the noun *karāš*. I transliterated and translated it above as though it was from the noun *karašû* (see CAD 8, s.v. *karašû*, 214). However, it is possible that *karāš* could be from either the noun *karašu*, “camp” (see CAD 8, s.v. *karašu*, 210-12), or *karšu*, “belly, womb, body, mind, hear” (see CAD 8, s.v. *karšu*, 223).

⁹⁴ An example of another prophesy with the phrase *ana qāt mullûm* can be found in ARM 10 7.

⁹⁵ CAD 10.1, s.v. *malû*, 187.

⁹⁶ As found in W. G. Lambert, “Literary Style in the First Millennium Mesopotamia,” *JAOS* 88 (1968): 127.

Similar to the Code of Hammurabi lines 20-21, the verb appears as a precative and in a petition. However, as opposed to delivering anyone into the power of another, here *qāt mullûm* requests the acquisition of goods. Perhaps these goods were to fill the storehouse recently built, or perhaps they were to provide for the sustenance of the one who commissioned, or oversaw, the rebuilding of the storehouse. What is known is that here *qāt mullûm* seems to be functioning in an acquisitional manner.

Akkadian also attests *qātam mullûm* with abstract direct objects. In the Enūma Eliš, as part of the strengthening and empowering of Marduk, it is said:

*ibnīma šar erbetta wallid^d Anum
qātuššu umalla*

Anu created and bore the four winds
To his hand he filled them (I 105-06)⁹⁷

The four winds were part of Anu’s dominion and power. Thus, by filling them, or delivering them into the hand of Marduk, Anu is delivering at least some of his own power and dominion to Marduk, thereby empowering him to be the new leader.

Also in the Enūma Eliš, but as part of the preparations for battle against the gods, Tiamat raised up Kingu and said to him:

*addi tâka ina puḥur ilī ušarbīka
malikūt ilī gimrassunu qātukka ušmalli*

I cast on you a spell; I promoted you in the assembly of the gods
I entrusted to you (lit. “I had your hand filled with”) the rule of all the gods (I 153-54)⁹⁸

Because the noun *malikūt* is an abstract form, it would seemingly militate against something tangible having been placed in Kingu’s hands. Rather, when Tiamat filled

⁹⁷ See Talon, *Enūma Eliš*, 37.

⁹⁸ See Talon, *Enūma Eliš*, 39. The same lines also appear in III 43-44 and III 101-02.

Kingu's hands, she was simply enabling or otherwise empowering him to rule based on who she was.

On the human level, when Šagaraktišuriaš was called to rule, the cylinder of Nabonidus described it thus:

inū dŠamaš u dAnnunitu ana bēlūt māti šum imbu šerret kala nišī qātūa ušmallū

When Šamaš and Annunit called a name for lordship of the land, they filled my hands with a lead-rope for all people (CT 34 35 iii 46-48)⁹⁹

Here lordship seems to be equated with the “leading rope (*šerret*) of all people.”

Typically a leading rope was tied around the head or neck of an animal or person to exert control and thereby ensure they followed where their owner, or captor, desired. Thus, an actual rope may have been placed into the hand of Šagaraktišuriaš, or it could just be figurative for the control of the people.¹⁰⁰

Even the examples Jacob Milgrom provided in full support of “to ordain a priest” can just as well, if not better, support the idea of empowering.¹⁰¹ For example, Nebuchadnezzar recorded:

uddušu ešrēti kešēri abtātīm umallū qātūa

(Marduk) enlisted me (lit. “filled my hand”) with the renewing of the sanctuaries and the repair of the ruins. (VAB 4 110 iii 28-30)¹⁰²

⁹⁹ As found in S. Langdon, “New Inscriptions of Nabuna'id,” *AJSL* 32 (1916), 108, 115. See also CAD 10.1, s.v. *malū*, 189; 11.1, *nabū*, 37; 16, s.v. *šerretu*, 136.

¹⁰⁰ Could the hoop given to kings by deities in Mesopotamian iconography actually be a coiled leading rope?

¹⁰¹ See Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 539.

¹⁰² Stephen Langdon, *Die neubabylonischen königsinschriften* (VAB 4; Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1912), 110-11. See also CAD 1.1, s.v. *abtāti*, 66. For a similar text, see VAB 4 142 ii 9-10.

Clearly figurative, *qāt mullûm* seems to not only deliver a duty, but to demonstrate that Marduk entrusted and commissioned Nebuchadnezzar. Thus Marduk could be understood as ordaining Nebuchadnezzar in the sense of giving him authority and power to renew the sanctuary. But such ordination is not to any priesthood. Rather, it is simply an empowerment and authority to renovate.

A second example cited by Milgrom of the way *qātam mullûm* is attested in Akkadian literature, and which ostensibly supports the notion of priestly ordination, concerns Aššurbanipal.¹⁰³

bārûtu šipir lā innennû umallû qātûa

(Šamaš and Adad) bestowed on me (lit. filled my hand with) the lore of the diviner, the craft which will never be revoked. (VAB 7 254 I 9)¹⁰⁴

The word *bārûtu* is an abstract form of the noun *barû*, a special class of priests preoccupied with divination. Thus *bārûtu* designates the specific lore or craft of the *barû*. In Mesopotamia, *barû* priests studied long and hard to become such because there was a great deal of lore, incantations, procedures, and omen formulas to learn and memorize. That Aššurbanipal's hand was filled with this knowledge does not suggest that he became, or in the Hebrew notion, was ordained a *barû*.¹⁰⁵ Rather, it suggests that he was granted the knowledge possessed by a *barû*.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ See Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 539.

¹⁰⁴ Maximilian Streck, *Assurbanipal und die letzten assyrischen Könige bis zum Untergange Niniveh's* (VAB 7; 3 vols.; Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1916), 254. See also CAD 2, s.v. *bārûtu*, 132; 4, s.v. *enû*, 177; 17.3, s.v. *šipru*, 83.

¹⁰⁵ Contra Milgrom, who translates the phrase, "(Šamaš and Adad) have inducted me into the priesthood" (*Leviticus 1-16*, 539).

¹⁰⁶ In effect, should he have desired to become a *barû*, he would not have to worry about learning the trade.

The above texts have hopefully provided an adequate and representative view of the variety of ways *qātam mullûm* is used. In summary, it is frequently used to denote the delivering of an individual, or group of individuals, to the power of another. The phrase is also used to denote the acquisition of goods, empowering of individuals, conferring of kingship, commissioning to tasks, and endowing with knowledge. Thus, the phrase *qātam mullûm*, more often than not, denotes the transferring, or granting, of authority and power from one in authority and power to one who is not. It should be recognized that, when one transfers authority, one is actually empowering somebody else. While this could support the notion of empowering priests, it could just as easily and indeed was used to support general empowerment.

CHAPTER V

A SOLUTION

The greatest support for the validity of this proposal is found in the actual contexts in which this phrase occurs. As such, it is befitting to apply this new and broader meaning for *millē' yād* as “to empower” to each of the eighteen occurrences.

Exodus 28:41 identifies four things as being requisite to the ordination of Aaron and his sons as priests. One of those four things is *millē' yād*, thus creating a problem with the meaning of “to ordain a priest.” The integrity of the verse suggests a meaning that participates in enabling Aaron and his sons to function as priests (*wěkihānû*). The proposed meaning of “to empower” provides just that. Moses would then be understood as being commanded “You will dress them—Aaron, your brother, and his sons with him—and you will anoint them, and you will empower them, and you will sanctify them, and they will function as my priests.” This enables the combination of the four commands to culminate in the ordination of Aaron and his sons.

Since Exod 29 provides a prescription for priestly ordination, everything within the chapter should work together to establish that ordination. This includes the four occurrences of *millē' yād*. However, under the current axiomatic understanding of “to ordain a priest,” such a unity of meaning is highly problematized. Thus v.9b is made to either ignore the washing, dressing, and anointing that took place in vv.4-9a, or to ignore the sacrificial rituals, and other occurrences of *millē' yād* that take place in vv.10-35. A similar scenario encapsulated v.29. In v.33, everything prior to the consumption of the

millû`îm is ignored. And v.35 problematizes the whole gamut. As opposed to vv.9b, 29 and 33, which could presumably easily be done within a day, v.35 states it takes seven days. However, the proposal that *millē`yād* means “to empower” dissolves these problems and strengthens the unity of the chapter.

Verse 9b becomes a general instruction to empower Aaron and his sons. Stripped of the idea of ordination, it can be read either as summarizing, and thus concluding the prior rites, or as introducing the following rituals with no detriment to the overall aim of the chapter. Thus washing, dressing, and anointing are just as integral to the overall ordination ritual as are the sacrifices. The same argument applies to v.29.

Consumption of the *millû`îm* in v.33 can now be understood to further empower Aaron and his sons. It overshadows and ignores nothing. Rather, it adds to the overall effect. Finally, the seven days of v.35 can be understood as referring to seven days of empowering. The result is that throughout the ordination ritual of Exod 29, Aaron and his sons are continually empowered, ritual after ritual, day after day, so that on the eighth day they are fully authorized and enabled to function as priests (see Lev 9).

As mentioned in Chapter 3, because *millē`yād* only occurs once in Lev 8, v.33, it can refer to priestly ordination without complication. Thus, here, the meaning of “to empower” can bear the nuance of “to ordain a priest” without complicating the reading of the chapter. However, as also mentioned in Chapter 3, if Lev 8:33 is interpreted in light of its sister-verse, Exod 29:35, then such a nuance becomes problematic. While the context is still priestly ordination, based on the multiple occurrences of *millē`yād* in Exod 29, it can be argued that *millē`yād* in Lev 8:33 should be treated identically to the

same in Exod 29:35. As such, this new proposal provides a way of understanding that bridges the complexities of interpretation.

Both Lev 16:32 and 21:10 juxtapose anointing and hand-filling so as to become high priests. As such, *millē' yād* can logically be understood as “to ordain a priest.” However, if read in light of Exod 29, due to the similar context of inheriting the high priest’s office through anointing and hand-filling, then the complications associated with *millē' yād* in Exod 29:29 may have some relevance here. Either way, whether *millē' yād* refers to priestly ordination or simply empowering, these passages still refer to priests becoming high priests.¹⁰⁷

In Num 3:3, *millē' yād* seems to be the only thing that separated Aaron’s sons from simply having been anointed at some previous time and functioning as priests. It would appear that the function of *millē' yād* is solely to empower them to serve as priests. As such, understanding *millē' yād* in the sense of “to ordain a priest” would be ideal here.

¹⁰⁷ Interestingly, the LXX does not include the word “hand(s),” τὰς χεῖρας in its translation of Lev 21:10. This thereby suggests either a different meaning to the text or the lack of necessity of the entire phrase to affect the meaning of the Hebrew idiom. Since every other occurrence of this idiom in the Septuagint includes τὰς χεῖρας, it would seem inappropriate to draw far-reaching conclusions from the lack of τὰς χεῖρας in Lev 21:10.

However, if the translators attempted to convey equivalent meaning over word-for-word literalness here, the use of the verb τελειόω would suggest the meaning of the Hebrew idiom can be found within the meaning of the verb. According to Delling’s translation of the verb, this would suggest that the Hebrew idiom would equate with a perfecting, completing, or bringing to an end (see Delling, *TDNT* 8:79-80). In other words, the Hebrew idiom would be about the end result of enabling an individual to act in whatever capacity. In relation to priests, Snijders and Fabry mention the lack of hands in the LXX Lev 21:10 points to the priest being “made suitable or qualified to exercise his office” (*TDOT* 8:302). Extrapolating from this, it would seem logical that the verb connotes making an individual “suitable or qualified” and the context connotes the idea of priests exercising their office. Thus a sense of empowering seems to be suggested.

Similar to Num 3:3, in Judg 17:5, 12, *millē' yād* is the only thing Micah does to his son and the Levite prior to each becoming his priest (*wayyēhî-lô lēkōhēn*). Thus *millē' yād* appears integrally related to ordination. Since Micah did nothing but *millē' yād* and its result was the empowering to be priests, *millē' yād* can here be understood as “to ordain a priest.”

Both 1 Kgs 13:33 and 2 Chr 13:9 juxtapose the making of priests (*'āsâ kōhēn*), filling the hand (*millē' yād*), and becoming priests (*hāyâ kōhēn*). In doing so, these verses provide a strong argument for the relation of *millē' yād* to a meaning such as “to ordain a priest.” However, it is not common that parallel phrases are completely, one-hundred-percent, identical. While the words and meanings may overlap, there is generally a difference in at least nuance. As such, here the relation between the “to empower” and “to ordain a priest” may be seen as evident. When an individual is ordained to be a priest, they are empowered with the authority and responsibilities associated with acting a priest. Thus, 1 Kgs 13:33 and 2 Chr 13:9 do not necessitate understanding *millē' yād* as meaning either “to empower” or “to ordain a priest.”

Since priesthood and priestly service are nowhere explicitly mentioned in Exod 32:29, there is no necessity to assume *millē' yād* refers to priestly ordination. Additionally, all the context suggests is that the actions of the Levites equated to their hands being filled and thereby paving the way for their receiving a blessing. In other words, it would appear that *millē' yād* empowered the Levites so as to receive a blessing. There is no reason to assume the blessing is the priesthood. However, should that, in fact, be the case, then *millē' yād* could be seen as empowering them to receive the blessing of

the priesthood—which, if one so chose, could be considered empowering for priestly ordination.

Speaking to the laity of Israel, David’s question in 1 Chr 29:5 “Who will make a voluntary offering so as to fill their hand (*lěmallō`wt yādō*) to the Lord?” is hard to understand as referring to priestly ordination. Besides the issues surrounding individuals ordaining themselves, the context seems to connote some act of devotion whereby, in v.9, “the people rejoiced on account of their voluntary offerings, for they offered them with a whole heart.” Thus it appears that by filling their hand through the offerings, they empowered themselves to joy, suggesting *millē`yād* may here best be understood as meaning “to empower.”¹⁰⁸

Also speaking to the laity of Israel, Hezekiah said “Now you have filled your hand (*millē`tem yedkem*) to the Lord. Come near and bring sacrifices and thank-offerings to the house of the Lord” (2 Chr 29:31). Similar to 1 Chr 29:5, it is hard to understand this verse as referring to priestly ordination. However, it is also difficult to understand just how they had “filled their hand to the Lord” and what it refers to. If the priests and Levites represent the people, then one may surmise that the cleansing and rededication of the temple comprised the hand-filling. It may then follow that only after such a hand-filling would the presence of the Lord return, and the bringing of sacrifices and thank-offerings be permitted. Therefore, one may say the hand-filling (*millē`yād*) empowered

¹⁰⁸ After stating that *millē`yād* was used in a context besides that of ordination, Snijders and Fabry, *TDOT* 8:305 cite this verse as a demonstration that the phrase signifies an increasing of strength so as to be capable for service of YHWH. Though he still claims a form of consecration, or ordination, the idea of empowering is true to the text and the idiom.

the people to bring sacrifices, and therefore draw near the presence of the Lord—which may have also been an empowering force.

As mentioned in the introduction and Chapter 3, there can be little doubt that *millē' yād* in 2 Kgs 9:24 means something other than “to ordain a priest.” Context requires Jehu to manipulate a bow in such a way as to enable him to shoot Joram with such force that an arrow pierces [through] his heart. As such, “to empower” is both logical and contextually fitting. Jehu empowered himself by filling his strength through the bow; thus Jehu empowered his bow.¹⁰⁹

While the altar of Ezek 43:26 cannot be ordained as a priest, it can be, and is, empowered so as to make sacrifices offered upon it efficacious (see v.27).¹¹⁰ As such the change the Septuagint makes in order to emend the verse to read “they [the priests] will fill their hands (πλήσουσιν χειρας αὐτῶν)” as opposed to “they will fill its [the altar’s] hand (*ūmillē' ū yādō*)” is completely unnecessary.¹¹¹ But even if it were the priests, the fact they are already priests suggests the idea of ordaining them again as priests is

¹⁰⁹ The idea of Jehu filling his strength was previously noted by Snijders and Fabry: “The weapon gives him strength and ability; through it he is full of power” (*TDOT* 8:305). While their interpretation does move away from priestly ordination and towards the idea of empowering, the force of their move is somewhat lessened by their forcing a connection with priestly ordination: “Now he is removed from normal life and ‘consecrated’ to a superhuman commission” (*TDOT* 8:305).

¹¹⁰ “While Exod. 29:22, 26, 27, 31 and Lev. 8:22, 29 speak of an ordination ram (*‘el hammillu’im*), the present ordination of an inanimate sacred object is without parallel” (Block, *Book of Ezekiel*, 611; see also Zimmerli, *Ezekiel*, 435).

¹¹¹ “It comes as no surprise that reference is made to filling the ‘hand’ of the altar (Ezk. 43:26). The sanctuary, too, and especially the altar, possesses a ‘soul’ that can be extinguished and must thus be ‘charged’ anew. It is fortified by the sprinkling of blood and other atonement rites. (The LXX has misunderstood the passage, having not the ‘hand of the altar,’ but rather the ‘hands of the priest’ be completed or filled.)” (Snijders and Fabry, *TDOT* 8:304).

redundant and superfluous. However, there is nothing illogical about them becoming further empowered as they cleansed the altar so they could proceed to offer efficacious sacrifice.

As can be seen, understanding *millē' yād* as meaning “to empower” fits each of the eighteen contexts in which the phrase appears. Moreover, it is less problematic than the rather axiomatic meaning of *millē' yād* as “to ordain a priest.” That empowering can refer to ordination, when context requires or suggests, further strengthens the argument for *millē' yād* as a Hebrew phrase expressing empowerment.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

As has been demonstrated, there are numerous difficulties incumbent in understanding the idiom *millē' yād* as solely meaning “to ordain a priest.” Chief among those is that it simply does not work in all eighteen occurrences of the phrase, five of which do not even mention priests. Even of the thirteen that do mention priests, a significant portion struggle with the meaning of “to ordain a priest.” That it can refer to the priestly ordination in some instances is unarguable. However, a contextual nuance of a phrase should never be taken as the basic meaning of that phrase.

As such, this proposal neither completely breaks away from, nor dissolves current scholarly work. Rather, it is an attempt to find a single basic meaning that can be effectively applied in more places than the current, axiomatic one. Thus, it is suggested that “to ordain a priest” be relegated to a nuance of a more general meaning—that of “to empower.” This meaning is intentionally broad so as to permit such nuancing as specific contexts necessitate, thus it is being proposed as that basic meaning. This meaning has the strength of integrity with regards to the constituent parts of the phrase *millē' yād* in the Hebrew. The Greek also attests this meaning through how this phrase is translated in the Septuagint. Further support is garnered by an analysis of the meaning and use of the Akkadian parallel *qātam mullûm* in a variety of texts. However, the most important test of integrity is how the meaning of “to empower” remains true to the contexts of each of

the eighteen occurrences of the phrase. As these have been discussed previously, two examples should suffice.

The first is that of Jehu. Rather than ordaining himself with a bow, he empowers himself through a bow (*wěyēhû millē' yādô baqqešet*). This explains how he was able to pierce Joram through the heart with an arrow despite his fleeing away in a chariot (2 Kgs 9:24). Second, Exod 29 becomes a unified whole rather than a fractured mass. Instead of describing several different ordinations (*millē' yād* at vv.9, 29, 33, 35) which culminate in one ordination (see v.1a), it becomes a process of continual empowerment that results in ordination. Through these two examples and others given throughout the thesis, it can be seen that *millē' yād* is best understood as an idiom meaning “to empower.”

APPENDIX A

THE EIGHTEEN OCCURRENCES

Verse	Hebrew Bible	Septuagint
Exod 28:41	<i>millē`tā`et-yād</i>	ἐμπλήσεις αὐτῶν τὰς χεῖρας
Exod 29:9	<i>millē`tā`yad-`ahārōn wēyad-bānāyw</i>	τελειώσεις τὰς χεῖρας Ααρων καὶ τὰς χεῖρας τῶν υἱῶν αὐτοῦ
Exod 29:29	<i>ūmallē`-bām`et-yādām</i>	τελειῶσαι τὰς χεῖρας αὐτῶν
Exod 29:33	<i>lēmallē`et-yādām</i>	τελειῶσαι τὰς χεῖρας αὐτῶν
Exod 29:35	<i>tēmallē`yādām</i>	τελειώσεις αὐτῶν τὰς χεῖρας
Exod 32:29	<i>mil`ū`yedēkem</i>	Ἐπληρώσατε τὰς χεῖρας ὑμῶν σήμερον κυρίῳ
Lev 8:33	<i>yēmallē`ett-yedēkem</i>	τελειώσει τὰς χεῖρας ὑμῶν
Lev 16:32	<i>yēmallē`et-yādō</i>	τελειώσουσιν τὰς χεῖρας αὐτοῦ
Lev 21:10	<i>ūmillē`et-yādō</i>	Τετελειωμένου
Num 3:3	<i>`āšer-millē`yādām</i>	οὓς ἐτελείωσαν τὰς χεῖρας αὐτῶν
Judg 17:5	<i>wayyēmallē`et-yad</i>	A: ἐνέπλησεν τὴν χεῖρα B: ἐπλήρωσεν τὴν χεῖρα
Judg 17:12	<i>wayyēmallē`mikā`et-yad</i>	A: καὶ ἐνέπλησεν Μιχα τὴν χεῖρα τοῦ Λευίτου B: ἐπλήρωσεν Μιχαιας τὴν χεῖρα τοῦ Λευίτου
1 Kgs 13:33	<i>yēmallē`et-yādō</i>	ἐπλήρου τὴν χεῖρα αὐτοῦ
2 Kgs 9:24	<i>millē`yādō</i>	ἐπλησεν Ιου τὴν χεῖρα αὐτοῦ
1 Chr 29:5	<i>lēmallō`wt`yādō</i>	πληρῶσαι τὰς χεῖρας αὐτοῦ σήμερον κυρίῳ
2 Chr 13:9	<i>lēmallē`yādō</i>	πληρῶσαι τὰς χεῖρας
2 Chr 29:31	<i>millē`tem`yedēkem</i>	ἐπληρώσατε τὰς χεῖρας ὑμῶν κυρίῳ
Ezek 43:26	<i>ūmillē`ū`yādō</i>	πλήσουσιν χεῖρας αὐτῶν

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