

## To Touch

*Please note: This document is parked under the banner Essays on the Early Church simply for convenience.*

Recently a local radio station did an interview with an elderly lady living alone who like many of her age, was struggling with loneliness. Although this is nothing new, the person giving the interview wanted to find out how she was faring with the onset of the Covid 19 virus. In other words, was it increasing her sense of isolation or was her life pretty much the same? Unfortunately, it was worse. So when asked what bothered her the most, the interviewer was stunned by her reply. She hadn't had a hug or even the slightest physical contact for months.

The interview was conducted in mid August of 2020, so that means this lady had remained hug-less since early March. Fortunately she is somewhat tech-savvy and has access to Zoom and other forms of multi-media communication. Still, she as she said in a straight-forward manner, she couldn't get a hug or kiss through these platforms. Despite the ability to contact with friends and family visually and audibly, this served to compound her already lonely situation, not alleviate it. A very moving story, to be sure, with which many could identify. In back of everyone's mind is the question of how long will this continue. Even now at this point well over six months it's anyone's guess. The person giving the interview didn't bring this up...he didn't dare to...for fear of scaring the poor lady to death with the prospect of no physical contact, even the most rudimentary kind, for potentially the rest of her life. Then again, she knew this but figured it was best to leave unsaid. Soon after this broadcast had aired it was repeated and commented upon numerous times, for unwittingly she had become symbolic of the *novus ordo rerum*, the new order of things <sup>1</sup>.

I don't recall the radio program identifying this lady, let alone where she lived, but the poignancy with which she expressed herself had made her a minor celebrity. Overnight she became the poster child for Covid 19, unfortunately representative of a condition in which we find ourselves. The media is chock-a-block full of how the virus is affecting us, so much so that you have to tune most of it out, especially when it comes to post-apocalyptic scenarios. To make matters worse, we have non-stop coverage of the presidential election coupled with wild fires in the West and lest we

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<sup>1</sup>As of this writing we've grown accustomed to use various types of sanitizers as well as masks. The former are associated with cleaning or sterilization and the latter hide much of our faces. Both are further signs of how we've become more distant from each other. As noted already, the question is will it be permanent?

forget, ongoing racial unrest. And so the news is inescapable, lurking around every corner, waiting to pounce. One of the most frequent observations we hear is drawing a comparison between now and this time last year. Who would have thought this would have happened is the most common thing you hear. Either a nuclear war with North Korea or a major terrorist attack would have been more probable.

Covid 19 puts severe limits upon human contact, “social distancing” having become the new watch-phrase. We’ve come to hear about it constantly but as yet haven’t reflected upon it sufficiently. Part of the reason is its relative newness.

How/when/where it will develop or mutate is anybody’s guess. One thing is for certain as already noted. This unprecedented situation which descended upon the entire world almost overnight has revealed the importance of touch, of feeling embodied by that elderly lady. Touch ranges from the sentimental to the sexual and all the way to the spiritual. Suddenly people have discovered how this sense has impacted their lives. Since time immemorial people had been touching each other in various ways but haven’t reflected upon it until so recently. A friend of mine had mused, what would our lives be like if we were dealing with a plague that caused us to lose our sense of sight or hearing? Not good, of course, but touch? Surely that one has caught us off guard.

Because this website deals a lot with scripture through the medium of *lectio divina*, let’s take a look at some biblical instances of touch and see what they have to say, if anything. Perhaps an examination of them may play a role, albeit tiny, in helping us cope with the current situation. After all, in truth *lectio* is done first by touching the text and then by absorbing it as food. A quick look at any biblical concordance reveals quite a few instances of the verb to touch, more than meets the eye. But before delving into the list, we can begin with one of the most striking references, the first letter of John which is broken down into its sixteen respective parts. Expanding it in this fashion is deliberate so as to make it more real in our lives <sup>2</sup>. Some of the reasoning presented here may be repetitive. That betrays a certain lack of understanding but at the same time represents delight in going through the text. Regardless, an examination of John’s letter is intended as a guide to examine other biblical references which follow.

Please note that all quotes in this document are from the **RSV**.

1) *That which was from the beginning which we have heard, which we have seen*

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<sup>2</sup>As for “expansion” used here, it involves a certain liberty with the text, of fleshing out various possibilities which aren’t to be taken literally or in the definitive sense.

*with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands concerning the word of life—2) the life was made manifest, and we saw it and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and was made manifest to us—3) that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you so that you may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. 4) And we are writing this that our joy may be complete [1.1-3].*

### **Vs. 1. That which was from the beginning**

This is the beginning of an extended sentence running through vs. 3 after which we have vs. 4, pretty much as a summary as well as an introduction for the rest of this letter. For that reason it's included.

*Arche* or beginning also means origin or first principle which we can take here as the source of literally everything. As far as we're concerned, if there had been no beginning, nothing would exist, the idea being applicable in the absolute, not relative, sense. This tends to make *arche* somewhat abstract, difficult to wrap your head around, for it's only natural to ask what precisely is the nature of this beginning. To be quite honest, we have no answer.

Nevertheless, there's something intriguing...indeed mysterious...about this *arche*. If, for example, John omitted it, we'd be lingering in some kind of non-descript, amorphous eternity unable to reflect on what he's saying as is the case right now. On the other hand, it can be argued that at all times we are in eternity—true from a safe dogmatic point of view—but small consolation as a statement thrown out there. The temptation is to leave *arche* hanging around and focus upon everything else. However, use of the relative pronoun *ho* or “that which” as having stepped outside *arche* changes everything. It leads to humanizing *arche* by reason of being present directly to us. Admittedly for some to have it otherwise would be more convenient. That is to say, instead of attention being upon *ho* which demands our response, *arche* is kept as more manageable because it's kept sufficiently far away. Thus it won't interfere with our lives and will have minimum impact upon us.

As for searching out *arche*, it's pretty much like searching for a blob, something amorphous. More precisely, you don't look directly for something in which you are already present though it's okay to seek out hints of it indirectly. That's precisely what can be applied to *ho*. It has stepped outside *arche* and views it objectively, putting this somewhat imperfectly. Now *arche* is allowed to emerge on its own...from behind and unexpectedly...so to speak. Also *arche* as a beginning surmises that an

end exists. Does that men we can forget about *arche* and look the other way no matter how distant that may be? While such a way of thinking borders upon the primitive, admittedly we indulge in it, so might as well admit it right now. We should also keep in mind that part of the problem is our translation of *arche* which automatically evokes its opposite.

When we hear the word “beginning” right away there comes to mind the first word of Genesis, *bere’shyth*, with emphasis upon the preposition “in” or (*b-*). That makes it necessary for a verb to be present as indicative of the action that takes place within this *b-* instead of *re’shyth* hanging out there by itself. As for the verb, it’s *bara’* (to create) which will be discussed a bit later. Without it there’s no reason even to speak of a beginning because *re’shyth* would be just as amorphous as *arche* in and by itself. So instead of any *ho* to make an exit we have instead the verb which may be a kind of prefigurement of this *ho*.

As for the *arche* of John’s letter with which we’re primarily concerned, emphasis is upon the *apo* or “from” as it pertains to *ho*, “that which” whereas with regard to *re’shyth*, emphasis is upon *b-* or “in.” Again, this noun is associated with the verb *bara’* or to create. One major difference between the former and the latter is that *apo* has no active verb. It presupposes, if you will, something or someone which until now has had its home in the apparently shapeless *arche*. In other words, the origin of *ho* is established through its relationship with *apo*. If it weren’t for the masculine relative pronoun *ho* everything would be in a kind of un-manifest state.<sup>3</sup> As for *re’shyth*, there’s no mention of anything similar to *ho* since from it everything emerges from it through the action of a “real”<sup>4</sup> verb, *bara’*.

This *ho* has a twofold relationship with *arche*. *Apo* indicates that it’s apart from *arche* insofar as it has left this absolute realm for some place opposite to it or for a place which doesn’t share in such absoluteness. Furthermore, *ho* dispels the mistaken notion that *arche* is some kind of state characterized by suspended animation where everything is held in abeyance. *Ho* isn’t held captive against its own volition, waiting to be set loose like a horse all tensed up waiting to burst from the starting gate. *Arche* doesn’t hold them fast and, of course, everything else in its grip. With this in mind we could say that *ho* is the only thing—in reality, not a thing but a person which becomes clearer as the letter proceeds—able to make good its exit. “Escape” is inappropriate because it has negative connotations, that *arche* is something you want to get away

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<sup>3</sup>The manifest notion of *ho* applies also to “*which* we have heard,” “*which* we have seen,” *which* we have looked upon and our hands and “(*which*) we saw it and testify.”

<sup>4</sup>Real in the sense of strong or active, thereby getting our attention.

from. You couldn't even if you wanted.

Although we and every animate being move on our own power, in another sense we do not. From the vantage point of *arche* it's more an optical illusion. Essentially we remain rooted in *arche* because that's our home. Even to think we're straying from it is an illusion to which we can subscribe quite easily. This false insight, of course, comes into clearer focus with the passage of time. As for such movement, it doesn't involve space or time but is perceived better as a slipping into forgetfulness. Thus remembrance in the sense of *anamnesis* is the way back home. We see that all our outward efforts, despite the best intentions, are for naught. That makes us look somewhere else or within. We have no choice at this point not to do otherwise. It's the only option.

Also *apo* is a way of saying that *ho* has its roots within *arche* and not elsewhere. At first glance it looks as though *ho* is the only thing that has left *arche*. A better way of putting it is that *ho* is the first or primary element which has departed *arche*. However, that doesn't mean leaving *arche* is the same as abandoning, certainly not the case. In fact, *ho* takes along what's essential to *arche*, perhaps improving on it, if you will.

On the other hand, *apo* suggests a certain break with this origin, and to leave an origin means stepping outside it's secure space to what could be hostile territory (alien at best). And that flow has an end or goal usually represented by the word *telos*, end as completion or fulfillment. Where else would this *ho* go anyway except to where it's destined? Yet it stopped along the way, that is, in our human world en route to *telos*. Such is one way of viewing *ho*...Jesus Christ...or as Ps 68.18 puts it, "You ascended the high mount, leading captives in your train and receiving gifts among men."

### which we have heard

*Akouo* or to hear, to give heed is the first response to *ho* as it leaves *arche*, as though the *apo* associated with it aroused attention by making a perceptible sound and has attracted attention. Although the Christian community isn't mentioned, it's collective nature is assumed through use of the first person plural, "we." We can assume that past experience of having encountered this "which" had made a considerable impact, else it wouldn't be mentioned. For "we" it remains an event that isn't simply in the past but retains continuous presence. This it does along with seeing and touching, the six testimonies that follow.

### which we have seen with our eyes

*Horao* or to see (also as to look, give heed) is the second verb with regard to *ho*. Note that eyes—the common eyes of the local community—are added pretty much as a way to say their testimony is accurate, having been agreed upon as a common witness. *Horao* follows *akouo* which intimates the primacy of hearing. And this witness is not unlike the *apo* or from with regard to *arche*, that is, testifying that *ho* is *apo* it.

### which we have looked upon

The second verb pertaining to sight is *theaomai*, to gaze, to behold or to see clearly, a certain clarity implied as rendered by “upon” used in this RSV translation. It’s as though the *horao* above wasn’t quite sufficient and needed to be reinforced with a greater emphasis.

### and touched with our hands concerning the word of life.

The conjunctive *kai* (and) as found here connects *theaomai* with *pselaphao*, to feel or to grope about as a blind person does in an attempt to find something. Also it intimates feeling a piece of vegetable or fruit in the market to test its ripeness, etc. As this section indicates, one of the best ways to do this is with your hands. It’s almost as though John wanted to connect a verb of seeing with one associated where this faculty is secondary. Usually the sense of touch doesn’t get much press, taken as inferior to sight or hearing. However, it provides information that never would be available otherwise, so its value cannot be underestimated. As for *pselaphao*, it concerns the *logos* of life, *logos* being word-as-expression which means that one actually touches this *logos* or touches what seems impossible, that which had been uttered. Once in your possession, you can make it a part of yourself.

*Pselaphao* is used with the preposition *peri* translated here as “concerning” and also means around as though the touching was around or circling...*peri*...the *logos* of life.

There’s a dubious side to *pselaphao* worth pointing out, that is, as a confusion between hearing and feeling: “So Jacob went near to Isaac his father who felt him and said, ‘The voice is Jacob’s voice but the hands are the hands of Esau’” [Gn 27.22]. Two elements are involved. One, that Isaac was advanced in age though his death isn’t recorded until Gn 35.28 at one hundred and eighty years of age. The second is that despite having been deceived at the instigation of Rebekah, Isaac went

along with it because Esau was less trustworthy. In the case at hand, it seems that Isaac wanted so much to give his inheritance to Esau that he neglected the evidence of hearing for the more reliable one of touch. That is to say, compared with sight, both are more subject to distortion.

## **Vs. 2. the life was made manifest**

The life or *zoe* which those of John's generation were able to *pselaphao* became visible, *phanero* and also means to make known. Note that the verb is passive with regard to the *logos* or word-as-expression of life. I.e., another agent worked upon this *logos* to make it *phanero*. With regard to *ho*, certainly by now it strikes one that while the person of Jesus Christ isn't mentioned, without doubt he's the one inferred.

### **we saw it**

The verb here is *horao*, also as to look as well as to have sight. *Horao* is an immediate, active response to the passive manifestation of *phanero*. As for when this seeing began, no specific information is given. However, should we follow the Gospels, *horao* begins with Christ's birth but more than likely John has in mind a public manifestation, for example, his baptism.

### **we testify to it**

This testimony or *martureo* (also to give evidence, to bear witness) works hand-in-hand with *horao* of the last section which is connected with it. As soon as this *horao* is put out there, the same persons who did it may be considered as the ones who give witness or testimony. What this consists of isn't specified, however. Again, the lack of a proper name by now is causing the suspense to build.

### **we proclaim to you**

The verb *apaggello* also means to bring tidings, to report. If it weren't for the personal nature of *martureo* of the last section, there would be no *apaggello*.

### **the eternal life which was with the Father**

Here is what *martureo* and *apaggello* are centered upon, getting closer to the person involved but still not mentioning his proper name. Note that the *zoe* above which was made manifest or *phanero* is presented here as *aionios* or eternal. What makes it so

is an association with the Father, the preposition *pros* used. This reveals a lot about *ho*, a far from static picture, because *pros* is indicative of direction toward-which or continuous movement toward a specific goal. I.e., focus is more upon the movement than attaining the goal though certainly that's involved. Again, this *zoe* identified as *aionios* isn't given specifically as personal which means it's something more than that but certainly not impersonal.

### **was made manifest to us**

This is the second use of the verb *phanero*, the previous one as “the life was made manifest,” there with respect to *zoe*. Compared with the *zoe* which is *aionios*, it is *pros* relative to the Father. I.e., this *pros* relationship now clearly is made known to those whom John is addressing.

### **Vs. 3. that which we have seen**

The verb is *horao* as in “we saw it” above. Why the two instances? The first is in conjunction with *phanero* as well as *martureo*. The second or the one at hand ties along with what follows next.

### **that which we have heard**

The “next” mentioned in the previous section refers to *akouo* of vs. 1 which pertain to *ho* from the beginning or *arche*. Now that once *ho* is out there, it's able to be both seen and heard.

### **we proclaim also to you**

The *apaggello* at hand is noted in vs. 2 in conjunction with the eternal life.

### **that you may have fellowship with us**

The *apaggello* at hand is for the purpose of having *koinonia* or fellowship—that which is in common (*koinos*)—with those belonging to the church or in general, the early Christians.

### **and our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ**

The *koinonia* is more than a group of Christians assembled as in a church. Rather, its



task is to mirror the common-ness from which it's derived, that between the Father and Jesus Christ. Though present now, it's in seminal fashion waiting to be fleshed out as time goes by.

#### **4) And we are writing this that our joy may be complete.**

The writing, of course, consists of this letter but with emphasis upon the first three verses which are unpacked here. The joy or *chara* wouldn't be complete (*pleroo*, to fill in the sense of bring to completion) unless those whom John is addressing become part of the *koinonia* at hand.

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Now that these first three verses of John's first epistle have been outlined, what follows is a select list of biblical references pertaining to the sense of touch along with notes. We can keep in the back of our minds, its presence ever echoing there. *Nagah* is the verb used most and can apply either to an ongoing or continuous contact or one that's temporary, that is to say, between the persons or objects involved. It may be compared with *davaq* or to cling which signifies more an inward adherence. In the first case at hand, the temporary *nagah* ends up with that inward *davaq*, if you will. It's an external act done even momentarily with everlasting consequences. Some within the Christian tradition are fond of calling this original sin...a (or the) sin which is original.

**Gn 3.3: but God said, "You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die."**

Note that this verse begins with the conjunctive *v-* usually translated as "and," here as "but." Such conjunctives are very frequent and sometimes go untranslated, their chief purpose being to move the action along at a pace you don't pick up in translation.

So here we have the man and woman living in the garden without a care in the world. At the same time they couldn't get out of their minds the divine prohibition against eating from the tree. What good would that fruit be anyway if left uneaten? Obviously we're not dealing with any old tree. Deliberately its kind goes unspecified along with its fruit. No matter where they went within the confines of the garden they couldn't get their attention off it by reason of its central location. Surely the Lord must have regretted putting them in such a situation.

In the verse at hand the Lord himself imposes a prohibition against *nagah* which is bound up with eating the fruit of the tree. And this tree has a particular location, in the garden's center. Eating is more than *nagah*. It's putting within one's body that which is outside and hence is a more serious offense. By uniting this eating and touching the Lord foresees the tragedy about to unfold, knowing that he can't prevent it. Also one might argue that he's provoking the man and woman. If he had placed this tree in some other location...off to the side, for example...perhaps things might have worked out quite differently. And so having uttered these words turns out to be a *fait accompli*. They can't be retracted. The only recourse now is a kind of last-ditch hope against hope that the newly created man and woman will refrain from eating the fruit.

This tree was smack in the middle of the garden, *tok* being the middle with the preposition *b-* or "in" prefaced to it. That means everything within the garden is focused upon that center, revolving around it, so to speak. The animals were aware of this tree, of course, but being irrational, weren't tempted to approach it. Instinctively they gave it a wide berth. Also implied is that the garden is enclosed though this isn't specified, let alone if there's anything outside it. After all, a garden or *gan* is something protected by a fence. Within such confines how could anyone not be drawn to this *tok*, feeling its constant tug as it draws everything to it inexorably like a drain in the center of a sink.

**Gn 26.11: So Abimelech warned all the people saying, "Whoever touches this man or his wife shall be put to death."**

The context is Isaac dwelling in Gerar which he does at the Lord's command (cf. vs. 2). Having arrived there, Isaac got wind of what the local inhabitants thought about the wives of foreigners among them. I.e., they were far from being safe, considered as fair game. So he decided to call his wife Rebekah his sister, but after a while, the local king, Abimelech, saw they two behaving as man and wife in a loving sort of way. Note that vs. 8 says a "long time" meaning that Isaac and Rebekah had kept up their ploy successfully for quite a while.

One day Abimelech summoned Isaac to inquire as to this behavior. Although the situation was a private one where Isaac easily could have taken offense, he was in a delicate situation, living in Gerar pretty much as a guest. All the king had to do was to make known that Rebekah was there for the taking. Nevertheless, he decided against this, warning (*tsavah*, to command) the people to leave them alone...i.e., not

to *nagah* Rebekah under penalty of death. And so the two were left at peace until the Philistines envied Isaac's prosperity which compelled Abimelech to send the two away. In the meantime it must have been somewhat awkward for the couple, that is, not only having been spied upon by none other than the king but their relationship made public. After all, Isaac had taken great pains to keep this relationship quiet a "long time" as noted above. And so the personal *nagah* reached the king and from there the people.

**Gn 32.25: When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and Jacob's thigh was put out of joint as he wrestled with him.**

Vs. 24 identifies the person wrestling with Jacob as 'ysh or "man," plain and simple. He isn't specified as an angel or some other heavenly being though 'ysh could be taken as a person in the general sense. The verb *rahah* or to see is used here in the sense of coming to a realization, occurring after what appears to be a considerably long struggle which had lasted most of the night. *Rahah* is tied in with awareness of the fast approaching dawn when the man wishes to be let go, Jacob apparently having the upper hand in the match. As for the beginning of this most unusual match-up, it must have taken well after evening twilight so 'ysh wouldn't be recognized. As for Jacob, you have to give him credit, not fearing to being alone without support while facing his opponent.

The reason for this match isn't stated but can be inferred as a preparation for the dreaded meeting of Jacob with his brother Esau whom he hasn't seen since having defrauded him of his birthright. Now Jacob is alone without support of his extended family. The verb at hand is 'avaq which aptly means to pound, to be small. At the outset of this match, 'ysh realizes that he could not prevail or *yakal* (to be able) and reaches this conclusion towards dawn as the verse intimates. The two go at it without exchanging any words, nor do they attempt to identify each other.

Failure to *yakal*...to prevail before sunrise...forces 'ysh to touch the hollow of Jacob's thigh. If he doesn't, Jacob would recognize him not so much as a human being but as an other-worldly being. You'd think he would have known this during the wrestling match since the two were entwined so closely for most of the night. However, 'ysh managed to conceal his face which wasn't too difficult in the total darkness. Besides, a non-human being had powers transcending human ones. Nevertheless, Jacob continued to wrestle despite his *nagah* which earned respect from the 'ysh who bestowed the new name of Israel (he who strives with God). Then and only then Jacob...now Israel...realized that 'ysh has the capacity to change his name which is

pretty close to changing his very nature. It must have taken a long time, a very long time if not the rest of his life, for Israel to realize that he has prevailed (*yakal*) against God. Actually here is the only instance where a human has done this.

**Ex 4.25: Then Zipporah took a flint and cut off her son's foreskin and touched Moses' feet with it and said, "Surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me!"**

A footnote in the RSV says that this incident is based on an archaic tradition which traces the origins of circumcision. As for the *nagah* involved, it's as intimate as you can get, connecting the son with the father, "feet" often used to represent genitalia. To Zipporah's lasting credit, she acted quickly to save her husband Moses from being slain by the Lord. Neither he nor his son were circumcised which is why the Lord sought his death despite having been commissioned to lead Israel from Egypt. Without this rite, Moses and his sons would not have been considered Israelites. This, in turn, would in effect nullify the redemptive act of the Exodus.

As for Zipporah's words, she exclaimed that Moses was a bridegroom of blood. He was so startled by this that he couldn't say a word. Interestingly, she passes off the scene as quickly as she had arrived, Moses going about his business as though nothing had happened. That is to say, he meets his brother Aaron in the wilderness where they proceed to prepare the Israelites. As for Moses apparently being uncircumcised, note that in Ex 6.12 and 6.30 he calls himself a man of uncircumcised lips. Perhaps that's why Aaron was his spokesman in dealing with the Egyptians.

**Ex 12.22: Take a bunch of hyssop and dip it in the blood which is in the basin and touch the lintel and the two doorposts with the blood which is in the basin; and none of you shall go out of the door of his house until the morning.**

This verse is part of the Passover ritual, hyssop or *'ezov* also used as a cleansing agent as found in Ps 51.7: "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." Note that the text at hand doesn't mention sprinkling but *nagah*, the hyssop soaked in blood rubbing up against the doorposts. This act is one of demarcation between what's inside and what's outside. The blood will prevent the Lord himself from slaying the first born of the Israelites. Being the Lord, he could do this whether or not the door was open or closed. Perhaps if an angel or messenger were involved, there would be no need for all this.

And so the people are to remain indoors until first light after which they will venture outside. From here on after the Israelites are to recreate this pivotal event which vs.

25 calls a service or *havodah*, literally as something done.

In conclusion, compare this strict command to remain indoors with the Lord being inside the garden along with the man and woman.

**Ex 19.12-13: 12) And you shall set bounds for the people round about saying, “Take heed that you do not go up into the mountain or touch the border of it; whoever touches the mountain shall be put to death; 13) no hand shall touch him, but he shall be stoned or shot whether beast or man, he shall not live.”**

This verse is in preparation for the Lord’s descent upon Mount Sinai. Setting bounds or *gaval* (also means to determine) is absolutely necessary and reads more stringently as “you shall set bounds the people.” In other words, Moses is not simply to fence off the mountain but is to impose a kind of inner fence...restraint...least the people rush forward. To date the people hadn’t had such a direct encounter with the Lord even though they had been fed with manna and quails. You’d have to go back to the crossing of the Red Sea to witness something comparable.

It turns out that *gaval* isn’t necessary, for as vs. 16 recounts, on the third day there was such a magnificent display of divine splendor that the people trembled, *charad* also as to terrify. Nevertheless, the Lord wants to take no chances. And so he bids Moses to hurry along with this *gaval*. At the same time he’s telling them not to ascend the mountain, let alone *nagah* it, the verb being *shamar* or to watch much as someone keeping guard over a city. Thus the slightest *nagah* would bring instant death.

To bring home this *gaval* further, any trespasser will be stoned to death, that is, killed at a distance so no one else can contract the same fate. The words “he shall not live” are added more as emphasis, not as a kind of after-thought.

**Ex 29.37: Seven days you shall make atonement for the altar and consecrate it, and the altar shall be most holy; whatever touches the altar shall become holy.**

The number seven or *shavah* is a sacred number, the most famous example being the day when the Lord rested from his creation. Also the verbal root (same spelling) means to swear an oath. As in the case at hand, the period of seven days may be kept in mind, only here the sense of time’s passage is suspended.

Everyone’s attention is focused upon making atonement and consecrating the altar,

*kaphar* and *qadash*. The former fundamentally means to cover and the latter, to set apart. That in essence is what the people are doing during this time with regard to the passage of time. They are covering it as well as setting it apart. As a result of this observance for seven days, it seems to involve sacrifices as described before and after this verse.

Note that the seven days of this *kaphar* and *qadash* will make the altar most holy or literally holiness of holinesses, the noun being *qodesh*. As pointed out just above, *qadash* is used along with *kaphar*; however, *kaphar* isn't expanded as such. Nevertheless, it has the preposition *hal-* (upon) used with regard to the altar ("upon the altar") whereas *qadash* does not. The obvious conclusion? Any object that touches this altar becomes *qadash* (i.e., it does not become *kaphar*).

**Ex 30.29: you shall consecrate them that they may be most holy; whatever touches them will become holy.**

This verse forms part of an extended sentence going back to vs. 26 and applies to *qadash* or the setting apart of the table, utensils, lamp stand, altar of incense, altar of burnt offering along with the laver and its base. Afterwards or after the verse at hand comes the anointing of Aaron and his sons as well as *qadash* them. The phrase *qodesh qodashym* applies here as it does with the altar being "most holy" in 29.37. Similarly, anything that touches these objects becomes *qadash*. Note that both here and in 29.37 the verb *nagah* is used with the preposition *b-*, "whatever touches in (*b-*) them."

**Lev 5.2-3: 2) Of if anyone touches an unclean thing, whether the carcass of an unclean beast or a carcass of unclean cattle or a carcass of unclean swarming things, and it is hidden from him, and he has become unclean, he shall be guilty. 3) Or if he touches human uncleanness of whatever sort the uncleanness may be with which one becomes unclean, and it is hidden from him when he comes to know it he shall be guilty.**

The Book of Leviticus contains numerous references concerning observance of religious rituals. Therefore it's no surprise that we find many instances of *nagah* in a ritual sense.

It seems that *nagah* has two different applications. The first involves more specifically *nephesh* or soul for "anyone" which suggests that the *nagah* involved runs deeper than physical contact. That is to say, it applies to a *davar* or thing,

fundamentally as word or anything expressed, modified here by *tame'*. This general word for unclean implies a separation of the profane from the sacred, the profane represented by *nevelah*, carcass. Even though a person makes contact unknowingly, he becomes *tame'* and therefore guilty, '*asham*.

The second application involves any sort of uncleanness (*tame'* again) as applied to humans. This person similarly is guilty even though he discovers later on that he had made contact. Although *nephesh* isn't used, we can assume it applies here.

**Lev 6.18: Every male among the children of Aaron may eat of it as decreed forever throughout your generations from the Lord's offerings by fire; whoever touches them shall become holy.**

Reference is to a cereal offering or *minchah*, generally a gift not involving the sacrifice of an animal which here belongs to the male side of Aaron's family line. This eating of *minchah* is decreed as lasting forever, *chaq-holam* or literally a statute everlasting. The *minchah* is specified further, that is, from the offerings of the Lord done by fire. It should be noted that *minchah* ties in with something baked and hence fire as described in the previous verse.

Although reserved for Aaron's male descendants, still anyone...any Israelite...is entitled to *nagah* it, the preposition *b-* or "in" being used. Such *nagah* results becoming holy or *qadash* in the ritual sense of cleanliness. As for the preposition *b-*, often it is associated with *nagah* in these references from Leviticus. In this way it shows the close connection between who or what does the *nagah* and the object at hand.

**Lev 6.27: Whatever touches its flesh shall be holy; and when any of its blood is sprinkled on a garment, you shall wash that on which it was sprinkled in a holy place.**

Reference is to a sin offering made a priest in a holy place, a *maqom* which is *qadosh* which isn't specified but most likely is close to the holy of holies. In other words, there may be a number of such *maqom* for various ritual purposes. Instead of "whatever" the Hebrew text has *kol* or "all." That is to say, anyone who *nagah*-in (i.e., *b-*) this offering partakes of its holiness.

Any blood that may have been sprinkled on one's garment must be washed in a *maqom* which is *qadosh*. I.e., such a *maqom* is to be one that is set apart, the fundamental meaning of *qadash* and words derived from it.

**Lev 7.19: Flesh that touches any unclean thing shall not be eaten; it shall be burned with fire. All who are clean may eat flesh,**

The flesh at hand can be seen in light of vs. 18, “flesh of the sacrifice of his peace offering” or that which is made by an Israelite. The verse at hand seems to mean that even if it *nagah* anything unclean or *tame’*, it can’t be consumed but needs to be burned. The expression “burned with fire” seems redundant but expresses full destruction of what’s involved.

The verse at hand has a second sentence which continues into the next verse dealing with a person who has uncleanness on (*hal-*) him and must be cut off from the people. *Nephesh* is used as in 5.2 above to show that seriousness of the matter at hand.

**Lev 7.21: And if any one touches an unclean thing, whether the uncleanness of man or an unclean beast or any unclean abomination, and then eats of the flesh of the sacrifice of the Lord's peace offerings, that person shall be cut off from his people."**

This verse comes on the heels of the previous one which, in turn, spills over to vs. 20 where *nephesh* continues to be used. Here the uncleanness or *teme’ah* applies not only to man and beast alike but to an abomination. *Sheqets* is that which is *tame’* or unclean and isn’t specified but seems to include any offering that isn’t prescribed. So if the *nagah* of such things as presented is carried over to eating flesh from the peace offerings of the Lord, a worse fate awaits this person. He has violated these offerings which are *shelem*...full of *shalom*, if you will...and deserving (*nephesh* again) of being *karath* or cut off. That is to say, his soul will suffer such a permanent severance from his own people.

**Lev 11.8: Of their flesh you shall not eat, and their carcasses you shall not touch; they are unclean to you.**

Reference is to swine “because it parts the hoof and is cloven-footed but does not chew the cud” [vs. 7]. I.e., no one can *nagah* such an animal because it’s *tame’*.

**Lev 12.4: Then she shall continue for thirty-three days in the blood of her purifying; she shall not touch any hallowed thing nor come into the sanctuary until the days of her purifying are completed.**



References is to a woman who had given birth to a son who must continue (*yashav* also to sit down as well as to abide) in her blood during the process of purification, *tahorah*. Within this extended period she must refrain from *nagah* of anything that is holy or *qodesh*. In a way, she and whatever is *qodesh* are similar in the sense of being apart. Similarly, this woman must stay out of the sanctuary or *miqdash* for thirty-three days.

**Lev 15.5: And any one who touches his bed shall wash his clothes and bathe himself in water and be unclean until the evening.**

The context is a man having had a (seminal) discharge or *zuv*. Note that this verse applies to another person who has *nagah* the bed. Despite washing in water, this person remains *tame'* until evening which is the beginning of a new day.

**Lev 15.10-12: 10) And whoever touches anything that was under him shall be unclean until the evening; and he who carries such a thing shall wash his clothes and bathe himself in water and be unclean until the evening. 11) Any one whom he that has the discharge touches without having rinsed his hands in water shall wash his clothes and bathe himself in water and be unclean until the evening. 12) And the earthen vessel which he who has the discharge touches shall be broken; and every vessel of wood shall be rinsed in water.**

The idea behind these three lengthy verses is that a person who is unclean makes unclean anything with which he comes in contact, *nagah*. i.e., it's passed on not unlike a virus. The precise nature of this *nagah* isn't specified as is the case with most of these references from Leviticus. And so *nagah* is tied up intimately with the notion of separate-ness expressed through use of words related to holiness such as *qadash*.

In this section note two references to evening, the beginning of a new day, as found in the previous verse. Although the context is ritual, to remain in such uncleanness for an extended period of time would make it spill over into one's *nephesh* or very soul which has been noted several times above.

**Lev 15.19: When a woman has a discharge of blood which is her regular discharge from her body, she shall be in her impurity for seven days, and whoever touches her shall be unclean until the evening.**

In this instance *zuv* applies to a woman whereas in 15.5 it's in reference to a man.

Note her being in her impurity or *nidah* which applies more often to menstruation. Here the sacred number of seven (*shavah*, cf. Ex 29.37) applies. So if a person *nagah* this woman during this sacred time, he or she becomes *tame'* until evening or the beginning of a new day.

**Lev 15.21-23: And whoever touches her bed shall wash his clothes and bathe himself in water and be unclean until the evening. 22) And whoever touches anything upon which she sits shall wash his clothes and bathe himself in water and be unclean until the evening; 23) whether it is the bed or anything upon which she sits when he touches it he shall be unclean until the evening.**

Three references to *nagah* which occasion three references to evening where the idea of a new day is inferred.

**Lev 22.4-6: None of the line of Aaron who is a leper or suffers a discharge may eat of the holy things until he is clean. Whoever touches anything that is unclean through contact with the dead or a man who has had an emission of semen, 5) and whoever touches a creeping thing by which he may be made unclean or a man from whom he may take uncleanness, whatever his uncleanness may be – 6) the person who touches any such shall be unclean until the evening and shall not eat of the holy things unless he has bathed his body in water.**

Reference is to the line or *zarah* (also seed, sowing) of Aaron. Reason? His lineage is singled out because it is priestly and therefore responsible for maintenance of rituals, etc. Here *nagah* occurs three times: contact with the death and emission of semen, creeping thing and that which is generally unclean. Yet again we have an example of the importance of evening or beginning of a new day.

**Lev 22.27: When a bull or sheep or goat is born, it shall remain seven days with its mother; and from the eighth day on it shall be acceptable as an offering by fire to the Lord.**

The importance of time set apart by the number seven or *shavah* (cf. 15.19) is brought out with regard to animals.

**Num 4.15: And when Aaron and his sons have finished covering the sanctuary and all the furnishings of the sanctuary as the camp sets out, after that the sons of Kohath shall come to carry these, but they must not touch the holy things lest they die. These are the things of the tent of meeting which the sons of Kohath are to carry.**

Like so many other verses, the one at hand begins with the conjunctive *v-* (and) which shows the close connection between the action at hand and what had proceeded it as well as what follows. Also it serves to heighten the sense of urgency by Aaron and his sons in finishing (*kalah*, also as to complete) their covering or *kasah* of both the sanctuary and its furnishings. *Qodesh* is the noun for sanctuary; compare with the slight variation of *miqdash* of Lev 12.4. Also note two similar looking and sound words, *kal-kely* or “all the furnishings.” Such is the preparation before the Israelites continue their journey, the covering for both protection and concealment.

A footnote in the **RSV** says that the sons of Kohath have a special distinction among the Levites, they being in charge of the most holy objects and thus under the immediate supervision of Eleazar (cf. 3.31-32). Even though Aaron and his sons took great care to protect the sanctuary, etc., still there was the danger of someone touching (*nagah*) what belonged there, this resulting in automatic death. One can't but think of Ussah reaching out to steady the ark when it was being brought to Jerusalem. Although the verb *nagah* isn't used, certain it's implied: “and God smote him there because he put forth his hand to the ark” [2Sam 6.7].

**Num 9.6-7: 6) And there were certain men who were unclean through touching the dead body of a man so that they could not keep the Passover on that day; and they came before Moses and Aaron on that day; 7) and those men said to him, "We are unclean through touching the dead body of a man; why are we kept from offering the Lord's offering at its appointed time among the people of Israel?"**

No verb of touch is found here, the text reading literally “unclean to soul man,” *tame'*, *nepshesh* and *'adam*. Such uncleanness prevented these men from observing the Passover, the verb *hasah* or to do being used. They decided to speak with Moses and Aaron, asking why they are kept from making an offering. Moses inquires of the Lord in vs. 8 which he does through hearing (*shamah*). He receives a response, namely, that these men can observe the Passover in the second month on the fourteenth day.

**Num 16.26: And he said to the congregation, "Depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men and touch nothing of theirs lest you be swept away with all their sins."**

Reference is to Dathan and Abiram who had allied themselves with Korah against Moses. Moses addresses the congregation, *hedah* derived from a verb meaning to

appoint and refers to a general assembly compared with the more solemn *qahal*. He commands everyone to depart (*sur*, to turn aside) from such men designated as wicked or *rashah* while not touching anything belonging to them. Here *nagah* equals the condemnation Moses is pronouncing.

*Saphah* is the verb to sweep away, also as to to add to anything. As for the *saphah*, it is the earth opening and swallowing up Dathan, Abiram and Korah, sending them all to Sheol.

**Num 19.11-12: 11) He who touches the dead body of any person shall be unclean seven days; 12) he shall cleanse himself with the water on the third day and on the seventh day and so be clean; but if he does not cleanse himself on the third day and on the seventh day, he will not become clean.**

Here the verb *nagah* is used with the preposition *b-* or “in” prefaced to *meth* or “dead body,” literally a touching-in. This results in a person (i.e., *nephesh* or soul) becoming unclean or *tame’* for the sacred number of seven (*shavah*) days. On the third day cleansing is to be done, the verb *chata’* which often means to sin in the sense of missing the mark. *Chata’* is in the piel, an intensive type of action with the active voice.

On the last or seventh day this person will be clean provided he cleanse himself on both the third and seventh days.

**Num 19.21-22: 21) And it shall be a perpetual statute for them. He who sprinkles the water for impurity shall wash his clothes; and he who touches the water for impurity shall be unclean until evening. 22) And whatever the unclean person touches shall be unclean; and any one who touches it shall be unclean until evening.**

Reference to this *choq* or statute which is *holam* or perpetual pertains to the person who has defiled the Lord’s sanctuary (cf. vs. 2). In the verse at hand we have three references to *nagah* or to touch, the first two with the preposition *b-* prefaced to the objects at hand:

- 1) *Nagah* with regard to water for impurity or an abomination (*nidah*, cf. Lev 15.19) which results in being *tame’* only until the evening of that day.
- 2) *Nagah* by a person who is unclean or *tame’* results in that object similarly becoming *tame’*.
- 3) *Nagah* with regard to touching an unclean object makes a person *tame’*

until evening, this applicable to one who isn't unclean as with #2.

**Num 31.19: Encamp outside the camp seven days; whoever of you has killed any person and whoever has touched any slain, purify yourselves and your captives on the third day and on the seventh day.**

The context is taking vengeance upon the Midianites where the Israelites are not to *nagah* anyone whom they have slain or anyone they come across as slain. If so, they are to purify themselves, the verb *chata'* as in Num 19.11-12. Not only that, any captives must undergo the same *chata'*. All this is in conjunction with the Israelites living outside their camp for the sacred number of seven days.

**Jos 9.19-20: 19) But all the leaders said to all the congregation, "We have sworn to them by the Lord, the God of Israel, and now we may not touch them. 20) This we will do to them and let them live lest wrath be upon us because of the oath which we swore to them."**

The conjunctive *v-* is translated here as "but" to show that Israel's leaders or *nasy'* (one who is lifted up) have reached a decision about the Gibeonites. Now they wish to communicate it to Israel or the congregation (*hedah*, cf. vs. 18). The issue is what to do with Gibeonites who feigned coming from a distant land that they may avoid the fate of Jericho and the destruction of other Canaanite cities and peoples.

The leaders say that they had sworn an oath with the Gibeonites by the Lord or literally "in (*b-*) the Lord, *shavah* being the root for the sacred number seven. This oath consists in not *nagah* them which is the same as not to slay them. The reason for allowing such deception is to avoid (divine) wrath coming upon not only the leaders (they, of course, were thinking of themselves) as well as the people. *Qetseph* derives from a verbal root fundamentally meaning to break.

**Jos 16.7: then it goes down from Janoah to Ataroth and to Naarah and touches Jericho, ending at the Jordan.**

This is part of an extended sentence beginning with vs. 7 in reference to the territory of the Ephraimites and its borders. Here as in other instances pertaining to borders (cf. 19.11-34) the verb is *pagah* which means to light upon, to reach. The general idea seems to be that a given territory reaches or extends to a given point or location and goes no further.

**Jdg 6.21: Then the angel of the Lord reached out the tip of the staff that was in his hand and touched the meat and the unleavened cakes; and there sprang up fire from the rock and consumed the flesh and the unleavened cakes; and the angel of the Lord vanished from his sight.**

The conjunctive *v-* is translated here as “then,” the previous action consisting of when at the angel’s command Gideon puts the meat and unleavened cakes upon a rock. As for this angel or *mal’ak* (messenger), no name is given which makes him all the more mysterious, for to know someone by name is to know that person’s identity. Here it’s concealed to emphasize the importance of the action.

The messenger touches the tip of his staff or *misheneth* which is used for leaning upon, most likely a walking stick. He (presumably messengers are neither male nor female) uses it to touch both the meat and cakes, causing fire to spring up from the rock underneath to consume them (*akal*, to eat). As soon as this happened, the messenger literally “went from his eyes.” Only then did Gideon realize it was a *mal’ak* of the Lord as the text has it. Next in vs. 23 the Lord, not an angel, spoke with Gideon telling him to build an altar there which is to be called “The Lord is peace or *shalom*.”

**1 Sam 1.11: And she vowed a vow and said, "O Lord of hosts, if you will indeed look on the affliction of your maidservant and remember me and not forget your maidservant but will give to your maidservant a son, then I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life, and no razor shall touch his head."**

The context is Hannah who was unable to conceive and because of this suffered abuse by the other wife (Peninnah) of Elkanah. This distressed her so much that she made a vow, *nadar* and the noun *neder* derived from it. The verb fundamentally means to fall out or to drop down as grain upon the threshing floor. The idea behind it is to give willingly and thus scatter oneself.

Before expressing the nature of her vow, Hannah puts forth a request to the Lord by way of making a condition, *im* or “if.” That is to say, should the Lord not follow through, then no vow. Hannah begs the Lord for the following three requests which she lays out as follows:

1) That the Lord not just look upon her affliction but “indeed look” which is expressed by double use of the verb *raha* (cf. Gen 32.25) followed by the preposition *b-* or “in” prefaced to *hony*, affliction.

2) That the Lord remember her, *zakar* also the verbal root for male, the same spelling.

3) That the Lord does not forget (*shakach*) her but gives her a son or *zerah*, also a seed or sowing.

**1 Sam 10.26: Saul also went to his home at Gibeah, and with him went men of valor whose hearts God had touched.**

Samuel had just anointed Saul as the first king of Israel who returns home after the event. The same applies to those “men of valor” or simply the noun *chayl* which means strength, power or might. Most likely they refer to Saul’s bodyguard, some of whom may have accompanied him and others going to their own homes. Although Saul turns out to have a tragic end, here his reign begins on a positive note, that is, with God having touched him and his *chayl*.

In the next verse which concludes this chapter some who are described as “worthless fellows” (*belyhal* also as wickedness) ask aloud whether or not Saul can save the people. Despite this, Saul showed admirable restraint. Regardless, the scene of Saul returning home has a domestic quality about it, a kind of interlude before things start to deteriorate.

**2 Sam 23.6-7: 6) But godless men are all like thorns that are thrown away; for they cannot be taken with the hand; 7) but the man who touches them arms himself with iron and the shaft of a spear, and they are utterly consumed with fire.**

These two verses are part of King David’s last words before his death, *belyhal* as “godless men” being the same as the previous entry thereby connoting that which is utterly of no value. Not only are such persons worthless but sharp as thorns which means they can only be touched by someone who is armed or *mala’*, a verb fundamentally meaning to fill. Taken literally, a person fills himself with iron before touching such thorns, representative of those who are *belyhal*. Once touched, fire consumes them, *saraph* meaning to burn up and can also mean to swallow down.

**1 Kg 6.27: He put the cherubim in the innermost part of the house; and the wings of the cherubim were spread out so that a wing of one touched the one wall, and a wing of the other cherub touched the other wall; their other wings touched each other in the middle of the house.**

The person at hand is King Solomon when building the temple at Jerusalem or more

accurately, planning and overseeing the entire process. Two images of cherubim are to protect the ark of the Lord which is placed *tok*, in the very center of the house (the preposition *b-* prefaced to it). *Beyth* often is used of the temple which gives is a certain familiarity to this sacred place. With regard to the ark which Solomon follows closely, the cherubim are mentioned first in Ex 25.18: “Make one cherub on the one end and one cherub on the other end.”

An outspread wing of one cherub is to extend to one wall while an outspread wing of the other cherub is to do the same with regard to the wall opposite it, pretty much filling the *tok* of the temple. The other wing of each cherub is to touch each other in this *tok* which means they direct attention to the most sacred part of the temple. The next verse says that the cherubim are overlaid with gold.

And so this verse has three instances of the verb *nagah*: the wing of one cherub to the wall, the same with regard to the other cherub and the second set of wings touching each other.

**1 Kg 19.5-7: 5) And he lay down and slept under a broom tree; and behold, an angel touched him and said to him, "Arise and eat." 6) And he looked and behold, there was at his head a cake baked on hot stones and a jar of water. And he ate and drank and lay down again. 7) And the angel of the Lord came again a second time, and touched him and said, "Arise and eat, else the journey will be too great for you."**

Reference is to the prophet Elijah after his successful contest with the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel followed by having fled the vengeful wrath of Queen Jezebel. *Hineh* or “behold” serves to introduced the *mal’ak* or angel/messenger rather abruptly. Elijah was in dire straights, fleeing for his life, which prompted the Lord to send this messenger. We can assume that the *nagah* or touch was gentle yet firm enough to rouse the prophet without frightening him. After all, Elijah could misconstrue this with an agent from Queen Jezebel.

The message takes the form of a command to eat and drink enough for the journey to “Horeb, the mount of God.” Interestingly Elijah took food and drink but went right back to sleep, apparently ignoring the angel. Perhaps he was too preoccupied with what had happened to take sufficient notice. However, a second time the angel touched Elijah who ate and drank after which he set off for Horeb. Again he seems to have paid no attention to the angel such as showing gratitude for this support.

**2 Kg 13.21: And as a man was being buried, lo, a marauding band was seen and**



**the man was cast into the grave of Elisha; and as soon as the man touched the bones of Elisha, he revived and stood on his feet.**

The occasion is a proper burial that was cut short by marauders or *gedod* which can apply to a small size of robbers or even soldiers, the former presumed here.

Unfortunately the mourners had to abandon the body by casting it into the nearest grave they could find which happened to be that of Elisha. Chances are his grave wasn't open but more likely the ground was somewhat depressed. We can presume that this anonymous man had requested being buried close to the prophet. If so, his wish came true...far more than anticipated...by coming back to life through contact with Elisha's grave. Where this man went or what he did simply isn't recorded.

**1 Chron 16.21-22: he allowed no one to oppress them; he rebuked kings on their account 22) saying, "Touch not my anointed ones, do my prophets no harm!"**

This verse forms part of a larger sentence begun in vs. 19, the context being King David's words at the consecration of the ark of the Lord being brought to Jerusalem. See Ps 105.14-15 for the same words.

David has in mind the Israelites wandering in the Sinai wilderness where the Lord protected them against oppression, *hashaq* also as to treat unjustly. He singles out kings or rulers who recognize that the Israelites have a twofold vocation: 1) anointed, *mashach* suggestive of the people sharing in a kind of collective kingship. 2) As prophets who are not to be harmed, this is suggestive of Moses' role as leader.

**2 Chron 3.11: The wings of the cherubim together extended twenty cubits: one wing of the one of five cubits touched the wall of the house, and its other wing, of five cubits touched the wing of the other cherub.**

This verse echos 1Kg 6.27 but with the added feature of giving the length of the wings of the cherubim and thus the size of the holy of holies. One cubit is approximately eighteen inches.

**Est 5.2: and when the king saw Queen Esther standing in the court, she found favor in his sight and he held out to Esther the golden scepter that was in his hand. Then Esther approached and touched the top of the scepter.**

This verse forms part of a larger sentence beginning with the first verse of a new chapter, Ahasuerus being the king of Persia. The act of touching the top of the royal

scepter was a way of the king acknowledging that Ester shared his authority and was free to make a request.

**Job 1.11: But put forth your hand now and touch all that he has, and he will curse thee to your face.**

Here Satan is taunting the Lord in order to test Job whom he had favored. Most likely Satan is jealous and wants to eliminate this rival. Not only does he want the Lord to touch Job but to set forth his hand which is a more dramatic expression and way to shame the Lord into revealing the true character of Job. “In all which is to him” is the literal way of putting “all that he has.” If the Lord follows through, supposedly Job will curse him, *barak* also as to bless and fundamentally to bend the knee. Not only does Satan guarantee that Job will do this but will do it right to his face, literally, “on your face.”

**Job 2.5: But put forth your hand now and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to your face.**

This verse is similar to the previous one only now Satan taunts the Lord to touch Job’s very body.

**Job 4.5: But now it has come to you, and you are impatient; it touches you, and you are dismayed.**

Words from Eliphaz one of Job’s friends. He and the others mean well by not only visiting but staying with Job in his affliction. However, their advice and sympathy ultimately ring hollow. Eliphaz contrasts Job’s earlier assistance to many people with his current afflictions which thereby make him impatient. The verb is *la’ah* also as to be weary and echos Job’s supposed *bahal* or dismay, this verb also as to tremble.

**Job 5.19: He will deliver you from six troubles; in seven there shall no evil touch you.**

Further words by Eliphaz which may be said as imposed unwillingly upon Job who is in too much distress to respond adequately. Eliphaz makes use of the sacred number seven or *shavah* where no evil will touch Job, even though in six troubles *tsarah* also as distress.

**Job 19.21: Have pity on me, have pity on me, O you my friends, for the hand of God has touched me!**

Words of Job in response to his other friend Bildad the Shuite (cf. 18.1). It's interesting that he cries out in desperation not so much from his current sufferings (true enough) but from well intentioned and unwanted advice. Listening to all this evokes the famous "patience of Job," not so much the pain he's undergoing. No small wonder that Job cries out twice for pity, the verb being *chanan* also as to incline favorably. Indeed, he acknowledges what the Lord had been forced to do at Satan's instigation noted above, that is, the divine hand having touched him. This seems to be something Job's friends completely overlook in favor of a chance to unload their free advice on a captive audience.

**Ps 104.31-32: May the glory of the Lord endure forever, may the Lord rejoice in his works 32) who looks on the earth and it trembles, who touches the mountains and they smoke!**

The first verse contains two short, heartfelt expressions. The first concerns God's *kavod* where the RSV "endures" is lacking thereby reading literally "May be glory of the Lord forever." The second expression is a desire for the Lord to rejoice or *samach* in what he has done, this verb connoting joy. Note that the noun *mahasah* derives from a verb meaning to make or to do compared with *barah* or to create.

The second verse has the Lord pretty much following up on the psalmist's twofold joyous expressions. That is to say, he chooses to do something rather dramatic. The Lord's touch makes the earth tremble and the mountains smoke. In sum, the Lord wishes to show that he can do anything far exceeding the psalmist willing him to do whatever is in his power.

**Ps 105.14-15: he allowed no one to oppress them; he rebuked kings on their account, 15) saying, "Touch not my anointed ones, do my prophets no harm!"**

These two verse form part of an extended section beginning with vs. 12 and concerns Israel. They mirror 1 Chron 16.21-22 above.

**Ps 144.5: Bow your heavens, O Lord, and come down! Touch the mountains that they smoke!**

*Natah* is the verb for "bow," more familiarly as to stretch out, incline. By first wishing the Lord to incline in the sense of making the heavens fall down, everyone's attention automatically will be drawn to such a dramatic event. And so the way for

the Lord to descend is prepared. The same dramatic effect applies to the psalmist wishing the Lord to have the mountains smoke as with Ps 104.31-32, perhaps turn into volcanoes.

**Is 6.7: And he touched my mouth and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin forgiven."**

This verse is within the larger context of the seraphim adoring the Lord, the number of which isn't given but presumed to be two. Both are protecting the ark as represented in the holy of holies; apart from this incident the seraphim aren't mentioned elsewhere. As for the incident at hand, no one seems privy to it. Even if others were present in the temple, they were unable to see what was transpiring. Certainly they wouldn't be able to comprehend it even if they could behold what Isaiah beheld.

Apparently Isaiah's exclamation in his vision of the Lord as being "a man of unclean lips" [5] got the attention of one seraph who decided to approach him. Surely the seraph wouldn't have done this without the Lord's permission which is assumed. When the seraph exclaims *hineh* or "behold" (cf. 1Kg 19.5-7) to get Isaiah's attention, he takes a burning coal from the altar in the Jerusalem temple and touches the lips of the prophet. This gesture removes any guilt which in the first place made Isaiah cry out.

As for the *nagah* at hand, it reads literally "on (*hal-*) your lips" which serves two functions: to *sur* or divert from Isaiah his guilt and *kaphar* or literally cover his sin. Only then could he join the seraphim in their praise of God: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts" [vs. 3]. Now he, like the seraphim, is prepared to do what the Lord puts as a question, "Whom shall I send?" [vs. 8], a kind of asking for volunteers to go to the people on a mission described in vs. 9, etc.

**Is 52.11: Depart, depart, go out from there, touch no unclean thing; go out from the midst of her, purify yourselves, you who bear the vessels of the Lord.**

This verse is within the fourth so-called servant song and is addressed by the Lord to those bearing the sacred vessels carted off with exiles to Babylon by King Nebuchadnezzar. Note that it's a double command to depart (*sur* as in the previous section) which is followed by two instances of going out or *yatsa'*. In the first, those doing so are not to *nagah* anything unclean, *tame'* (cf. Num 19.21-22). Most likely reference is to the Babylonian equivalent of the Lord's vessels.

The second *yatsa'* is with regard to a more specific location, *tok* or the very center, presumably of Babylon. Chances are the vessels were placed in that city's chief temple which the Israelites consider an abomination. Those bearing the vessels are to make an act of purification or *barar*, a verb fundamentally meaning to separate, select. Obviously this can apply to the people as a whole who are to maintain their ritual purity on the journey back home.

**Jer 1.9: Then the Lord put forth his hand and touched my mouth; and the Lord said to me, "Behold, I have put my words in your mouth."**

Compare this verse with the Lord putting forth his hand and the seraph touching the mouth of Isaiah. Both deal with the respective callings of two prophets who are to communicate the divine *davar* or words (as expression). Also in both instances *hineh* or "behold" is used.

*Davar* isn't explicit with Isaiah but certainly implied, for it is part and parcel of a prophet's vocation. The Lord *nagah* the mouth of Jeremiah is significant in that the Lord's *davar* are to be inserted within the prophet's mouth, thereby making him an instrument to speak such *davar*.

**Jer 12.14: Thus says the Lord concerning all my evil neighbors who touch the heritage which I have given my people Israel to inherit: "Behold, I will pluck them up from their land, and I will pluck up the house of Judah from among them."**

Whenever the words "Thus says the Lord" appear, we know that the Lord is about to take direct action without an intermediary. Here it involves neighbors who are evil or *rah* and who have dared to *nagah* the Lord's own heritage intended for Israel, the verb *nachal* and the noun *nachalah*.

After these words of introduction, if you will, the Lord begins his actual words with *hineh* (cf. Jer 1.9) or behold, the customary way of getting attention. Note the two uses of the verb *natash* or to pluck or to uproot (Jeremiah has the most occurrences in the Bible). The first is with regard to evil neighbors, literally "from upon" (*hal-*) their land and the second with regard to Judah. The second is specified as being among, *betok* or in the *tok* (cf. Is 52.11) or very middle of evil neighbors.

**Lam 4.14: They wandered blind through the streets, so defiled with blood that none could touch their garments.**

“They” refers to Israel’s prophets and priests who have shed the blood of the righteous as noted in the previous verse. Even though they stagger blindly throughout the city streets, no one dare *nagah* their garments which could refer to specific clothing relative to their office.

**Ezk 1.8-11: 8) Under their wings on their four sides they had human hands. And the four had their faces and their wings thus: 9) their wings touched one another; they went every one straight forward without turning as they went. 10) As for the likeness of their faces, each had the face of a man in front; the four had the face of a lion on the right side, the four had the face of an ox on the left side and the four had the face of an eagle at the back. 11) Such were their faces. And their wings were spread out above; each creature had two wings, each of which touched the wing of another while two covered their bodies.**

Vs. 8 speaks of what lays under the wings of these four creatures, namely, hands which are human. Their faces and wings are introduced in the next verse as touching one another, *chavar* meaning to bind or to connect (cf. vs. 11). In this tightly bound union the creatures advanced neither veering to the left nor to the right. As for the direction, nothing is said since Ezekiel was too taken aback at the vision to really notice.

As for the likenesses of their faces or their *demuth*, each creature had one of a man (‘in front’ as in the RSV isn’t in the Hebrew), lion, ox and eagle, that is to say, right, left and back, the last not in the Hebrew text. Vs. 11 says that each creature had wings spread out above, *parad* also meaning to expand or to divide, this being the only reference in Ezekiel itself. There are two other sets of wings, one touching those of its neighbors and the other covering their bodies.

**Ezk 3.12-13: 12) Then the Spirit lifted me up, and as the glory of the Lord arose from its place, I heard behind me the sound of a great earthquake; 13) it was the sound of the wings of the living creatures as they touched one another and the sound of the wheels beside them that sounded like a great earthquake.**

As with virtually every divine communication, long or short, direct or through the medium of an angel, it breaks off just as suddenly as it began. Such is the case with Ezekiel. Vs. 12 signals a return to Ezekiel recounting his experience beginning with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “then” which shows this sudden break-off and a swift move to the next phase of his mission. Now it’s the Spirit’s (*Ruach*) turn which,

compared with the Lord, doesn't speak but takes action. He (actually 'she') lifts up the prophet, *nasa'* being the verb.

It should be noted that the Hebrew order of vs. 12 differs, for after mention of this *Ruach* Ezekiel heard behind him the sound of a great earthquake, *rahash*. There's no indication that Ezekiel attempted to look behind him; perhaps the Spirit prevented him so he could only conjecture as to what he was hearing. With regard to the Lord's glory (*kavod*, cf. Ps 104.31-32), no verb is associated with it reading literally "blessed be the glory of the Lord." Then there follows the phrase "from its place" or *maqom* (cf. Lev 6.27) which implies a habitation which seems to lack a precise location.

The sound (*qol* also as voice) of a great earthquake is the *qol* of the living creatures' wings in vs. 13. Note the absence of any comparison such as "like." In other words, *qol* = earthquake. Interestingly, this earthquake-voice comes from the wings of the four creatures touching each other, *nashaq* also meaning to arrange, to arm as well as to kiss. Each creature has two wings, so multiply this eight-fold, and no wonder the *qol* resembles an earthquake. It isn't short term but prolonged, again the long, slow rumbling of the earth shaking beneath. To compound this *qol*, vs. 13 adds the one of the wheels ('*ophan*, cf. 1.16).

In vs. 12 the Spirit lifted up Ezekiel, the same *Ruach* which continuing this lifting (*nasa'*). The first is a partial lifting above the ground and away from the river Chebar. The *nasa'* at hand is of a different order than in vs. 12; the Spirit "took me away" (*laqach*). It removed Ezekiel completely away lest he be contaminated by those with him. In fact, he may have not even known of their inherent wickedness until this point.

**Ezk 9.5-6: 5) And to the others he said in my hearing, "Pass through the city after him and smite; your eye shall not spare, and you shall show no pity; 6) slay old men outright, young men and maidens, little children and women but touch no one upon whom is the mark. And begin at my sanctuary." So they began with the elders who were before the house.**

In vs. 5 the Lord speaks once again to the scribe having him say to the "others" in his hearing, literally as "in my ears," that is, Ezekiel as noted in vs. 1. The recently assembled executioners and six men are to follow after the scribe who stands out by reason of his linen garment. They are to slay those who don't have the mark on their foreheads which must have been the bulk of the city's population. Obviously it was a

terrible assignment, putting to death their friends, neighbors and even family members including little children and women.

This incident is not unlike the Levites whom Moses bade to slay those fellow Israelites who had worshiped the golden calf fashioned by Aaron (cf. Ex 32.27+). In sum, they are not to spare anyone nor show pity, *chus* and *chamal*, as in 8.18. The beginning point of this slaughter is significant, that is, the Lord's sanctuary or *miqdash* (cf. Num 4.15). After all, it was in this *miqdash* that the worst abominations were taking place, and the elders responsible for them were first to be put to death.

**Dan 8.5: As I was considering, behold, a he-goat came from the west across the face of the whole earth without touching the ground; and the goat had a conspicuous horn between his eyes.**

*Byn* is the verb for “was considering” and implies understanding from which is derived the preposition in between. It is used with “behold” or *hineh* (cf. Jer 12.14) which signifies the sudden appearance of something which here is a “he-goat” or *tsaphyr* (the same word is used for 'goat' in this verse). It occurs two other times, vss. 8 and 21, the former being cited here: “Then the he-goat magnified himself exceedingly.” The direction from which this animal came was the west, directly opposite the east where the ram did not charge, the direction of the setting sun and hence darkness. The he-goat not touching the ground suggests it did not belong to it but participated in another dimension, that of darkness or the west.

*Chazuth* is a noun for the adjective “conspicuous,” the text reading literally “a horn of sight.” It is similar to *chazon* last noted in vs. 1. Compare this “horn of sight” (and it doesn't necessarily mean to contain one or more eyes) with the little horn of 7.8, “eyes like the eyes of a man.”

**Dan 8.18: As he was speaking to me, I fell into a deep sleep with my face to the ground; but he touched me and set me on my feet.**

Normally a person wouldn't fall asleep under such dramatic circumstances, but Gabriel's speaking with (*ham-*) Daniel is no ordinary sleep but *radam* (it connotes snoring), not unlike that which God brought upon Adam when he created the first woman from his rib (cf. Gn 2.21). Yet another example of this type of sleep concerns Peter and John who witness Jesus' transfiguration (cf. Lk 9.32).

Here the verb *nagah* seems to be a gentle tap on the shoulder, if you will. Daniel was



so overcome by this *radam* that he needed help standing up in order that Gabriel communicate to him the significance of the vision.

**Dan 10.10: And behold, a hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees.**

As noted above or in 8.5, *hineh* or “behold” suggests getting one's attention. Here Daniel had just fallen into a state very different from the normal one and required being directed to what he will both see and hear, hence the reason for the *hineh*. Again, the identity of the man's hand isn't given, but whoever it is knew Daniel was in dire straits and needed consolation. This is best effected by touching, the verb being *nagah* which is similar to the case at hand.

Even though this hand is comforting, as of yet it hasn't calmed Daniel who was trembling or *rahad*. There is no Hebrew verb for the English “set me.” The best the mysterious unidentified man could do for Daniel is get him off his face and put him on all fours so he could crawl around a bit before standing on his two feet.

**Dan 10.16-18: 16) And behold, one in the likeness of the sons of men touched my lips; then I opened my mouth and spoke. I said to him who stood before me, "O my Lord, by reason of the vision pains have come upon me, and I retain no strength. 17) How can my Lord's servant talk with my Lord? For now no strength remains in me, and no breath is left in me." 18) Again one having the appearance of a man touched me and strengthened me.**

The unidentified man who had spoken with Daniel seems to have disappeared, being replaced by another who is introduced by *hineh* or “behold” (cf. vs. 10). This new being seems to be a man...”in the likeness”...or *demuth* (cf. Ezk 1.8-11). Perhaps the being who first appeared to Daniel decided his presence was too much and wished to send someone else, more human, if you will, to continue the revelation. The touching of Daniel's lips can be taken as a gesture of making him pure as is the case of Isaiah as noted above: “Behold, this (burning coal) has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin forgiven” [Is 6.7].

Daniel addresses this person as “my Lord” (*Adony*) who could be the Lord God himself although this isn't spelled out. Anyway, Daniel spontaneously pours out his complaint about how pains came upon him by reason of the vision, *tsyr*.

*Hatsar* as “retain” is used with respect to *koach* (cf. vs. 8) which includes Daniel’s whole being. To date he has witnessed a lot for one man, including visions as they pertained to Babylonian kings. At the same time no resolution seems to appear on the horizon despite promises made which must have made it difficult for him to continue in his position in the government.

Daniel spells out his complaint freely about having no more strength (*koach*). He emphasizes this by saying he has no further breath or *neshamah* which is equivalent to the Greek *psuche* compared with *ruach*, more the spiritual nature of a person.

The being in vs. 18 described as in the appearance of a man or *mar'eh* which translates in vs. 16 as vision. Daniel doesn't know if it is the first or second being who touched him, *nagah* as in vs. 10 under a similar circumstance. At once that *koach* or strength returned, *chazaq* being the verb used here as well as in the next verse which fundamentally means to fasten or to tie.

**Am 9.5: The Lord, God of hosts, he who touches the earth and it melts, and all who dwell in it mourn, and all of it rises like the Nile and sinks again like the Nile of Egypt.**

Here the verb *nagah* is used with the preposition *b-*, literally “touched in the earth.” This in-depth touching indeed is guaranteed to melt the earth. Also it causes all the inhabitants of the earth to mourn, *aval* also as to walk with one’s head cast down. It’s also described in terms of the rising and falling of the Nile river. Such a gesture comes on the heels of the Lord pronouncing judgment on all the people.

**Hag 2.12-13: 12) If one carries holy flesh in the skirt of his garment and touches with his skirt bread or pottage or wine or oil or any kind of food, does it become holy? The priests answered, "No." 13) Then said Haggai, "If one who is unclean by contact with a dead body touches any of these, does it become unclean?" The priests answered, "It does become unclean."**

This verse consists of two questions of a ritual nature asked by the prophet Haggai to the priests. To the first they respond simply in the negative, that is, with regard to flesh which is holy (*qodesh*, cf. Lev 12.4) or set apart most likely because it’s part of a sacrifice. In and by itself such flesh lacks the power to make anything *qodesh*. If the priests answered positively, they would be consenting to some kind of magic or exaggerated sense of holiness.

The second deals with a person who is unclean, that is, ritually, by reason of having made contact with a dead body. “Any of these” seems to apply to anything such a person touches, as though he were passing on an infection. It’s more reasonable that *tame’* is subject to contamination whereas holiness is not.

**Zec 2.8-9: 8) For thus said the Lord of hosts after his glory sent me to the nations who plundered you, for he who touches you touches the apple of his eye: 9) “Behold, I will shake my hand over them, and they shall become plunder for those who served them. Then you will know that the Lord of hosts has sent me.”**

“Lord of hosts” is mentioned twice, the first with regard to *hineh* (cf. Dan 10.16-18) or behold and the second with regard to the people knowing that the Lord has sent Zechariah to them.

Note that the Lord hasn’t sent Zechariah directly, but his glory or *kavod* (cf. Ezk 3.12-13) was the agent responsible. More precisely, this glory sent the prophet to the nations (*goyim*, used for those other than Israel) which had plundered Israel. Such plundering or *shalal* is equivalent to having *nagah* the very apple of the Lord’s eye, *bavah* also as cavity or aperture.

Instead of doing *shalal*, such *goyim* will themselves be subject to such *shalal* for anyone who had been in their service. There follows the conjunctive *v-* translated as “then”...as a result...that the Lord had sent Zechariah to his people.

### The New Testament

Three observations are in order. First, the majority of Gospel instances with the verb *hapto* (to touch) concerns Jesus healing people. Alternately this verb means to fasten, to bind as well as to lay hold of. Second, many instances of healing take place within the context of a large group or people often labeled as *ochlos* which has a certain unruly, mob-like air about it. Third, those who are afflicted are brought to Jesus by other people which can include family members, neighbors and the like. I.e., the healing has a more communal nature about it. occasion.

**Mt 8.3: And he stretched out his hand and touched him, saying “I will; be clean.” And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.**

Three actions function as one which cure the leprosy at hand: stretch, touch and to

say. This is put not in terms of healing but cleansing, *katharizo* being used twice, the first with Jesus willing it, *thelo*.

**Mt 8.14-15: 14) And when Jesus entered Peter's house, he saw his mother-in-law lying sick with a fever; 15) he touched her hand, and the fever left her, and she rose and served him.**

Here Jesus touches the hand of Peter's mother-in-law who goes unnamed. As soon as he does this *hapto*, the fever leaves her. Interestingly she wastes no time between being cured and serving Jesus, *diakoneo* (*dia-* or through) being the verb which in itself is a way of showing gratitude. Also it puts her in a kind of secondary position while Jesus and presumably Peter as well as other disciples continued their own discussion.

**Mt 9.20-21: 20) And behold, a woman who had suffered from a hemorrhage for twelve years came up behind him and touched the fringe of his garment; 21) for she said to herself, "If I only touch his garment, I shall be made well."**

*Idou* or behold serves to introduce something out of the ordinary, it being used in vs. 18 by a ruler asking Jesus to heal his daughter. The second *idou* functions to have this second cure, as it were, tag along after the first one. Note that the woman approaches Jesus from behind, not in front nor even from the side. She seems not wanting to interfere with Jesus as he makes his way with the ruler to cure his daughter. Surely this ruler was known to all, another reason for the woman to be quite hesitant. Nevertheless, she was desperate to end her twelve long years of suffering by the slightest touch. She didn't have to touch Jesus physically, just the very edge of his garment.

**Mt 9.29: Then he touched their eyes, saying, "According to your faith be it done to you."**

The incident at hand pertains to two blind men who approached Jesus shortly after he cured the woman in the passage above. That means they could have been nearby and heard all the commotion going on, especially because the local ruler had approached Jesus to heal his daughter. The healing of both men is done in accord with (*kata*) their faith expressed by "Have mercy on us, Son of David" [vs. 27].

**Mt 14.35-36: 35) And when the men of that place recognized him, they sent round to all that region and brought to him all that were sick 36) and besought him that they**

**might only touch the fringe of his garment; and as many as touched it were made well.**

This incident happens just after the storm on the lake when Peter approached Jesus on the water. When they had landed at Gennesaret, the locals recognized Jesus, *epiginosko* literally to know upon (*epi-*). Nothing is said as to what produced this *epiginosko*, simply that it happened. Implied is that Jesus had a special presence that caught everyone's attention. Also some may have recognized one or more of his disciples.

Apparently Jesus waited a while for people of the region to bring their sick to him. Note that they asked only to touch the fringe of his garment, nothing more, this being reminiscent of the woman noted in Mt 9.20-21. However, they begged Jesus that they do this whereas the woman did it on her own accord. Chances are that they got word of this, thereby believing that such a superficial touch would effect a cure.

**Mt 17.7: But Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Rise, and have no fear."**

This takes place just after Jesus had been transfigured, *metamorphoomai* or to be changed in form (*meta* or after and *morphe*, the noun for form). Peter, James and John were flat on their faces, having been filled with awe, the verb *phobeo* (to fear) and the adverb *sphodra*, very much. After Jesus told them not to fear, the three saw him alone, not with Moses and Elijah. They could deal with Jesus, but the other two?

**Mt 20.34: And Jesus in pity touched their eyes, and immediately they received their sight and followed him.**

Another healing Jesus does while in motion, that is, moving from place to place. Two blind men stop Jesus just outside Jericho where he asks what he can do for them. Obviously both he and they knew full well what was at issue. The verb *splagchnizomai* or to have pity suggests doing this with one's viscera or inner parts, so it's very intimate. *Splagchnizomai* is done simultaneously with touching the eyes of the two men which results in the immediate restoration of their sight.

What's more significant, however, is that they followed Jesus, this on the road to Jerusalem when shortly he would be put to death and rise three days later. We can assume that the two men witnessed this and were among the first members of the church.

**Mk 1.41: Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand and touched him and said to him, "I will; be clean."**

This verse parallels the cleansing of a leper noted in Mt 8.3. Also the verb *splagchnizomai* is used as with the previous entry. It seems that such moving of the viscera, if you will, is the source of this divine cleansing communicated through touch not just of the external part of the body but that person's *splagchnon*, visera.

**Mk 3.9-10: 9) And he told his disciples to have a boat ready for him because of the crowd lest they should crush him; 10) for he had healed many so that all who had diseases pressed upon him to touch him.**

The verb *proskartereo* (to have ready) means literally to adhere firmly to (*pros-* or towards which) and counters the verb *thibo* or to press, that is, the crushing crowd at hand. The reason? Word had gotten out, especially among those whom Jesus had healed, that others with various afflictions pressed upon him, *epiipto*, literally to fall upon (*epi-*). If such precautions weren't taken, thousands of hands would not simply touch Jesus but crush him.

**Mk 5.27-28: 27) She had heard the reports about Jesus and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his garment. 28) For she said, "If I touch even his garments, I shall be made well."**

Refer to Mt 9.20-21 for the same incident. Here the woman with a hemorrhage hears reports about Jesus which is rendered literally as "heard concerning Jesus." Word had spread quickly about Jesus' miracles, so naturally she wanted in on the action. Already she had determined that the simple, quick act of touching his garment might render her whole. It was worth the gamble.

**Mk 5.30-31: 30) And Jesus, perceiving in himself that power had gone forth from him, immediately turned about in the crowd and said, "Who touched my garments?" 31) And his disciples said to him, "You see the crowd pressing around you and yet you say, 'Who touched me?'"**

These verses continue with the same incident or right after the woman with a hemorrhage had touched his garments. *Epiginosko* (cf. Mt 14.35-36) literally means to know upon (*epi-*) and is followed by the prepositions *en* and *ex* as "in himself" and "from himself." There follows a second verb with *epi* prefaced to it, *epistrepho* or here as to turn about. I.e., the first *epi-* effects the second *epi-*. The reason?

*Epiginosko* made Jesus realize that *dunamis* or power had gone from him (*exerchomai*), this noun also as strength or might. How this *dunamis* leaves Jesus isn't spelled out, though one thing is certain. Jesus' awareness of this prompted him to exclaim aloud as to who had touched him. The disciples near him provided the necessary question without which the incident wouldn't have been spelled out so dramatically.

**Mk 6.56: And wherever he came, in villages, cities or country, they laid the sick in the market places and besought him that they might touch even the fringe of his garment; and as many as touched it were made well.**

This verse well conveys the way Jesus moves about, that his ministry isn't confined to one specific location even though geographically the area is rather limited. Note that people brought their sick to marketplaces or where people tended to congregate chiefly to do business and conduct politics. In virtually each place Jesus went, he had to pass through such locations.

This is the third time fringe or *kraspedon* is mentioned which shows that Jesus' healing power wasn't confined to his physical body alone but extended to each and every part of the garment clothing him. As for the verb "made well," *sozo* also means to save. In a sense, *kraspedon* is not unlike the border of Mount Sinai.

**Mk 7.33-34: 33) And taking him aside from the multitude privately, he put his fingers into his ears, and he spat and touched his tongue; 34) and looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, "Ephphatha," that is, "Be opened."**

The man here is one who is deaf and had a speech impediment. Perhaps the reason why Jesus took him man apart (*kat' idian* or by himself) is that it would be difficult to determine if and when he were healed due to the *ochlos* pressing in from all sides.

There's a close, even rapid connection between looking up, signing and *epphatha*, the last being Aramaic. Those who may have paid closer attention would recognize that this word applies to the people of Israel as a whole. That is to say, they are to remove obstacles to hearing the word of the Lord.

**Mk 8.22: And they came to Beth-saida. And some people brought to him a blind man and begged him to touch him.**

Reference is to Jesus along with his disciples shortly after having fed the five

thousand. Word of this must have reached Beth-saida beforehand, including the blind man. Harkening back to the *epphatha* incident, indeed he'd like the same applied to him, only here to his eyes.

**Mk 10.13: And they were bringing children to him that he might touch them; and the disciples rebuked them.**

Here is one of the few references where *hapto* is used without any healing involved. Chances are the parents of the children had gotten word of Jesus' miracles and hoped that his touching them would be a kind of preventive medicine. When these children grew into adults, it was impossible to forget this *hapto* which remained with them for the rest of their lives. Possibly some if not many joined the budding Christian community.

As for the disciples, their crassness is revealed here, pretty much safely unloading on the children; safely in that the children were unable to respond adequately. The preposition *epi-* (i.e., upon) prefaced to *epitimaō* is indicative of this. Quickly Jesus rebuked them and used the occasion to shift from *hapto* to taking the children in his arms.

**Lk 5.13: And he stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, "I will; be clean." And immediately the leprosy left him.**

The person involved simply doesn't have leprosy but according to vs. 12, is "full of leprosy." That means he's disfigured more than usual and pretty much close to death, utterly repulsive to behold. Nevertheless, when Jesus came by, he saw a last ditch effort to be cured which most people thought was impossible. So without hesitation, Jesus extended his hand and touched him, thereby performing an exceptional miracle. Note the adverb *euthus*, immediately. It counters the "full of leprosy" already noted.

**Lk 6.19: And all the crowd sought to touch him, for power came forth from him and healed them all.**

This time the crowd or *ochlos* (cf. Mk 7.33-34)...not just one or two desperate persons in need of healing...sought to touch Jesus. Without going through the motion of touching each individual person, Jesus allows *dunamis* (cf. Mk 5.30-31) or power to go out from (*exerchomai*, also Mk 5.30-31) him, thereby bringing about a kind of mass healing. I.e., it was not unlike Jesus feeding the multitude, of providing food for



them from meager resources. Immediately following this incident comes Luke's account of the beatitudes.

**Lk 7.14: And he came and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And he said, "Young man, I say to you, arise."**

This time Jesus doesn't touch a person but a bier on which lay a man described as the only son of his mother (i.e., the widow of Nain). Such touching automatically made those carrying it to stand in place, paralyzed, if you will, while Jesus bade the man to rise.

**Lk 7.39: Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw it, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner."**

The occasion is Jesus being invited to eat with a Pharisee named Simon (cf. vs 40), the motive not being clear. Perhaps this religious figure was simply curious or seeking to know more about Jesus before making a decision to follow him. Anyway, the meal is interrupted by a woman described as a sinner, most likely a way of saying she's a prostitute. Despite her very public display of repentance, the Pharisee was taken aback.

Although Simon is recorded as having doubts about Jesus allowing this woman to touch him, Jesus knows his thoughts and uses this as an opportunity to correct him. He does it by the example of a creditor who had one man owing a lot and another, a far lesser sum. Regardless, the creditor forgave both with the man owing more showing greater love. And so Simon and the woman are juxtaposed much to the chagrin of the former and delight to the latter.

**Lk 8.43-47: 43) And a woman who had had a flow of blood for twelve years and could not be healed by anyone 44) came up behind him and touched the fringe of his garment; and immediately her flow of blood ceased. 45) And Jesus said, "Who was it that touched me?" When all denied it, Peter said, "Master, the multitudes surround you and press upon you!" 46) But Jesus said, "Some one touched me; for I perceive that power has gone forth from me." 47) And when the woman saw that she was not hidden, she came trembling and falling down before him declared in the presence of all the people why she had touched him and how she had been immediately healed.**

This is the same story recounted in Mt 9.20-21 and given here in several verses

because the verb *hapto* occurs four times. This section show the verb as refined, if you will, by Jesus asking who had touched him. It was more a kind of rhetorical questions since so many people were thronging about him. Nobody could give an answer. Obviously the woman who did it was present and made herself known simply by her guilty look. That seems to be the meaning of the words “she was not hidden.” Peter impetuously asked Jesus who had done this. When he saw the woman approach Jesus he must have felt put in his place though not willing to admit it publicly. In other words, despite his good intentions, Peter never seems to learn.

**Lk 18.15: Now they were bringing even infants to him that he might touch them; and when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them.**

This verse corresponds to Mk 10.13 noted above, one of the few verses where *hapto* doesn't have direct bearing upon healing though certainly that must have been involved by way of preventative care by parents bringing infants to Jesus. *Brephos* is the noun used compared with *paidion* of the just referenced Mark verse. While both can refer to an infant, the latter more often refers to an older child.

The disciples weren't happy with what seems to have happened spontaneously. That led them to rebuke Jesus, *koluo* also as to forbid, withhold. Instead of countering this with his own rebuke, Jesus told them that what he has been trying to get across through his preaching centers upon becoming a *paidion* (i.e., not a *brephos*).

**Lk 22.51: But Jesus said, "No more of this!" And he touched his ear and healed him.**

The context is when Judas betrays Jesus. Note that Jesus touches the ear of the high priest's slave after it had been cut off and presumably laying on the ground. If this were the case, Jesus picks up the severed ear and restores it, *iaomai* meaning to heal in the general sense.

**2 Cor 6.17-18: Therefore come out from them and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch nothing unclean; then I will welcome you, 18) and I will be a father to you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."**

These two verses are part of several biblical passages which Paul quotes loosely but here are quoted in full. “Depart, depart, go out thence, touch no unclean thing; go out from the midst of her, purify yourselves, you who bear the vessels of the Lord” [Is 52.11]. This verse is cited above because it contains the verb to touch. In vs. 17 note the verb *eisdechomai* as to welcome. Literally it means to receive into, *eis-* being

prefaced to the verbal root. This leads naturally to a second and third *eis*, literally as “into a father to you” and “into my sons.”

The second verse from 2 Sam 7.14 runs as follows: “I will be his father, and he shall be my son. When he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men.”

**Col 2.21-22: 21) "Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch" 22) (referring to things which all perish as they are used), according to human precepts and doctrines?**

The three prohibitions seem to be part of general Jewish religious regulations, the verb *dogmatizo* in vs. 20 meaning to decree. The overall idea is to refrain from both external and internal (i.e., to taste) contact with everything perishable, *phthoros* or corruptible being equivalent to the noun *apochresis*, consuming, using up. Such is the inherent case with regard to any human precepts and doctrines, *entalma* and *didaskalia*.

**Heb 11.28: By faith he kept the Passover and sprinkled the blood so that the Destroyer of the first-born might not touch them.**

Reference is to Moses where keeping of the Passover equals the Destroyer not touching the first-born of Israel. The two verbs are *poieo* and *thiggano*, to make and to touch. I.e., *poieo* with regard to the Passover shows effort, of making it. Such effort pays off by the Destroyer, the participle *holothruo* being used. Note that this being goes unidentified here and in Ex 23 most likely refers to an angel...messenger...of death.

**Heb 12.18-20: For you have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire and darkness and gloom and a tempest 19) and the sound of a trumpet and a voice whose words made the hearers entreat that no further messages be spoken to them. 20) For they could not endure the order that was given, "If even a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned."**

Reference, of course, is to Mount Sinai which here the author says can be touched. Compare with Ex 19.12-13 noted above where the people are warned not to touch the mountain. After several verses there comes vs. 22 which begins with *alla* or “but” to show the contrast, that is, with the heavenly Jerusalem.

**1Jn 5.18: We know that any one born of God does not sin, but He who was born of**

**God keeps him, and the evil one does not touch him.**

Being born literally from (*ek*) God = not sinning. What sustains this is Christ (not specifically mentioned) who is born *ek* God. I.e., such *ek*-ness, if you will, serves to keep a person, *tereo* also as to guard, to watch over. With this in place, the evil one does not touch such a person, *poneros* also as painful, grievous.

## Apocrypha

**Wis 3.1: But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and no torment will ever touch them.**

*Psuche* is the noun for soul and singled out here as belonging to the righteous, *dikaios*. Implied is that those who are not *dikaios* similarly have souls but aren't in God's hand. There those who are *dikaios* won't be touched by torment, *basanos* also as inquiry, test by torture.

**Wis 18.14-16: 14) For while gentle silence enveloped all things and night in its swift course was now half gone, 15) your all-powerful word leaped from heaven, from the royal throne into the midst of the land that was doomed, a stern warrior 16) carrying the sharp sword of your authentic command and stood and filled all things with death and touched heaven while standing on the earth.**

Here *hapto* pertains to the *logos* or word-as-expression described as a stern warrior, the noun *polemistes* modified by the adjective *apotomos* which fundamentally means cut off, the notion of abruptness implying sharpness and severity. Such *logos* fills everything with death even while as upon earth he touches heaven.

This rather dreadful image of the divine *logos* waits for a special occasion with two characteristics: 1) a silence (*sige*) which is gentle (*hesuchos* also as being still) literally has around (*periecho*) all things and 2) around midnight or halfway through the night presented here as having a course (*mesazo*: to insert in the middle, to occupy a central position) which is swift (*tachus*).

**Wis 18.20: The experience of death touched also the righteous, and a plague came upon the multitude in the desert, but the wrath did not long continue.**

*Peira* as experience also means a trial or an attempt which here applies to death as

touching those who are *dikaios*...in God's hand as in Wis 3.1 above. Mention of a plague and the wrath that followed evokes Aaron stopping the destroying angel (cf. Num 16.41-50). Despite this murmuring against Moses and Aaron for the people claiming that they have killed their fellow Israelites (punishment of Korah, Dathan and Abiram), divine wrath was short. This reads literally as "but not upon much remains wrath."

**Sir 34.25: If a man washes after touching a dead body and touches it again, what has he gained by his washing?**

A rhetorical question intended to resolve an obvious situation: washing oneself after having touched a dead body followed by touching it once more. This double ritual offense has no gain by washing, the verb *opheleo* also as to be of use.

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