נשא יד

The biblical verbנשא when used in conjunction with the word יד refers to lifting one’s hands up high. This movement generally represents a gesture directed to another person, and, in the Bible, is ascribed to the hands of men, people in general, and God. The character and nature of the gesture changes based on context, and can thus be used in a variety of ways.

Hand-lifting is most commonly used in the Bible to make an oath; generally, it is God who does so. When it comes to humans, only men – never women – are described lifting their hands. There are five instances of this in the Bible, taking place in varying contexts. In Leviticus, Aaron raises his hands before the people, his gesture functioning as a physical expression of blessing (Lev 9:22). The passage in question does not specify whether the blessing had a verbal element as well, and it may be that the very act of lifting hands *was* the blessing, no words being spoken. By contrast, Moses and the hymnist of Psalms 28 address God. Moses’ hand-lifting is a symbolic gesture of taking an oath (Deut 32:40) and the hymnist in Psalms 28 lifts his hands in an act of benediction and prayer (Ps 28:2).

Besides these uses, the gesture may have a person as its object (in the form -נשא ידו ב). In such cases, the phrase functions idiomatically as a reference to betrayal. Thus, the leaders of revolts against David, Absalom and his army (2 Sam 18:28) and Sheba son of Bichri (2 Sam 20:21), are described as having lifted their hands “against him.”