

The Doctrine of the Stretching Forth of the Hand

1. The phrase *stretching forth the hand* or *putting forth the hand* is found in the Bible over 50 times; therefore it would behoove us to have some idea as to what it means.
2. The noun is mish^lach (מִשְׁלַח) [pronounced *mish-LAHKH*] associated with hand(s) is found in Deut. 12:7, 18 15:10 23:20 28:8, 20 Isā. 11:14 (without hands in Esther 9:12, 22 Isa. 7:25. Strong's #4916 BDB #1020.
3. The verb is shālach (שָׁלַח) [pronounced *shaw-LAHKH*] and it is found in association with hands in the Qal stem in Gen. 3:22 8:9 19:10 22:10, 12 37:22 48:14 Ex. 3:20 4:4, 13 9:15 22:8, 11 24:11 Deut. 25:11 Judges 3:21 5:26 15:15 I Sam. 22:17 24:6, 10 26:9, 11, 23 II Sam. 1:14 15:5 18:12 24:16 I Kings 15:4 II Kings 6:7 Esther 2:21 3:6 6:2 8:7 9:2, 10, 15–16 Neh. 13:21 Job 1:11, 12 2:5 28:9 30:24 Psalm 55:20 125:3 138:7 144:7 SOS 5:4 Jer. 1:9 Ezek. 2:9(?) 10:7 Dan. 11:42. In the Piel: Prov. 31:19–20. Strong's #7971 BDB #1018. The verb means simply *to send, to send forth, to send away*; however, it is obvious that there is no *sending* when it comes to the use of the hand because it is only going to go so far.
4. Others have rendered this as:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	Put your hand
<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	Putting your hand
KJV	Put your hand
NASB	The putting forth of your hand; undertakings
NEB	Whatever you undertake
NIV	Put your hand to
NRSV	Undertakings
Owen's Translation	Undertake
<i>Young's Lit. Translation</i>	Putting forth of your hand.
5. The hand speaks of what we do.
6. The first usage is a simple *stretching out the hand* or *reaching out of the hand* to take the fruit from the tree of life in Gen. 3:22. Our simplest understanding of this phrase is literally; that is, *to reach out and take something; to reach out and possess something, to stretch out the hand to grab something*. Gen. 8:9 is a similar usage (Noah *stretches out his hand* out of the ark for the dove to land upon, and he brings the bird back into the ark). The angels in Sodom *reach out and grab* Lot and bring him into the house with them. See Ex. 4:4 Deut. 25:11 Judges 3:21 5:26 15:15 (notice how these last 4 examples all are literal, but the result is to reach out and cause someone pain or death).
7. Abraham stretches out his hand to kill his son (Gen. 22:10, 12). Reuben tells his brothers to place Joseph into a pit, but not to *lay their hands* on him—the implication is that they would injure or kill Joseph if they did that (Gen. 37:22).
8. Jacob stretches out his hand to bless Ephraim and Manasseh in Gen. 48:14.
9. God tells Moses that He will *stretch out His hand* to strike Egypt with all His miracles (Ex. 3:20 9:15). This phrase is used in connection with an act of aggression in Ex. 24:11 (God against the heads of Israel) and in I Sam. 22:17 24:6, 10 26:9, 11, 23 II Sam. 1:14 18:12 24:16
10. Although shālach generally means *to send*, it is rarely used that way with the hand; Ex. 4:13 is an exception to this.
11. Stretching out the hand is used for taking something in thievery in Ex. 22:8, 11.
12. The noun mish^lach is not found until Deut. 12:7; therefore, at that point in time, the meaning of this phrase should have been clear to the Israelites. It has a two-fold meaning: (1) Considering the ways that this phrase has been used so far in God's Word, this should be most easily understood of that which one reaches out and takes. This is not necessarily in a criminal sense as we find in Ex. 22; in this context of the Lord's blessings, is reaching out and taking what God has provided for us. A similar meaning is to be found in Deut. 12:18, 15:20, 28:8. There is somewhat of a twist on the meaning in Deut. 28:20—when the Israelite is out of fellowship and under discipline, he will still reach out his hand to take things; however, these things will no longer come from the hand of God in blessing. Then God will send upon the Israelites curses, confusion and rebuke in all that they stretch their hand out to do. (2) Secondly, the hand represents what we do; stretching out the hand is the act of doing something or accomplishing something. This is why several of the translators rendered this words as *undertaking*.
13. Stretching out the hand in II Sam. 15:5 speaks of a literal stretching out of the hand; however, it is done in arrogance, rebellion and false compassion. Absalom would stretch out his hand to those who would come by to prostrate themselves before him.

14. In summing up, one stretches out the hand to take something—either God's blessings to them, the blessings they thing they deserve. One might stretch out their hand to a friend or to someone they want to cause them to think that they're allied with one another. This is the so-called *helping hand* or *the hand of fellowship*. One would also stretch out their hand to strike another. The actual usage of this phrase is easily determined by context and context also determines whether the stretching out of the hand is for good or for bad.