

MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT INSTITUTION

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A Study for Judaism • Christianity • Islam

DOCUMENT 286

LAY YOUR HAND UPON HIM

A Covenant Deep Dive into Numbers 27:18–23: *samakb* (the laying on of the hand) and *hod* (majesty) in the Commissioning of Joshua

What Did Yahweh Command Moses to Do for Joshua, What Passed to Joshua and What Did Not, How Does It Apply Today, and Who Has the Authority to Do It Today? — A Three-Religion Covenant Response

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The Message is Sent to the World

REACHING JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY, AND ISLAM

✡ JUDAISM	✝ CHRISTIANITY	☪ ISLAM
Rabbinic tradition builds <i>semikhab</i> (ordination by the laying on of hands) on this passage: “Moses ordained Joshua by placing his hands upon him” (Maimonides, Laws of the Sanhedrin 4:1). It reads the words “some of your majesty” as some of Moses' honor “but not all,” and says the face of Moses was like the sun and the face of Joshua like the moon (Talmud Bava Batra 75a). The court ordination of antiquity lapsed long ago, and an attempt to renew it at Safed in 1538 did not hold.	The New Testament records hands laid on the seven (Acts 6:6), on Barnabas and Saul (Acts 13:3), and on Timothy (1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6), and it warns, “Do not lay hands on anyone hastily” (1 Timothy 5:22). Catholic and Orthodox churches ordain by the bishop's laying on of hands, in a line they trace to the apostles (Catechism 1573, 1576). Many Protestant churches ordain through their elders or congregations. The Tanakh speaks first: what Moses did, and what he did not do.	The Qur'an does not name Joshua. Tradition identifies him as the young servant of Moses (Q. 18:60) and as one of the two men who feared Allah (Q. 5:23). Moses charges Aaron as his deputy: “Take my place among my people, and do right” (Q. 7:142). Islam has no ordination by hands and no priesthood. Authority is acknowledged by <i>bay'ah</i> (pledge of allegiance), a clasp of the hand: “the hand of Allah is over their hands” (Q. 48:10).

DOCTRINAL AUTHORITY — STANDING RULE OF MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT INSTITUTION

The sole binding authority of Miqdash Bethel Covenant Institution is the *Tanakh* — the written covenant of **Yahweh**. No Talmudic tractate, Church council decree, papal encyclical, hadith collection, or extra-biblical tradition carries doctrinal weight equal to or greater than the written Torah. Where any tradition conflicts with the written covenant, the written covenant governs without exception. The Talmud, New Testament, and Qur'an are cited as historical reference and comparative witness — never as superseding authority. Miqdash Bethel uses the Written Tanakh as its sole source for four reasons: it is the only text Judaism, Christianity, and Islam all recognize as originally given by **Yahweh**; it predates and underlies the Talmud, New Testament, and Qur'an, so testing those traditions against it follows the evidentiary direction of **Deuteronomy 19:15** — the earlier witness governs the later commentary; every later tradition that departs from the Tanakh does so by addition or reinterpretation, never by overturning the text itself, so the text remains the fixed standard; and **Yahweh's** own words declare the covenant unchanging (Malachi 3:6; Psalms 119:89), making the written covenant — not evolving institutional interpretation — the only stable ground for doctrine. All three great covenant traditions — Judaism, Christianity, and Islam — are addressed simultaneously and equally in every Miqdash Bethel document, because **Yahweh's** covenant belongs to every nation that will receive it. The **Deuteronomy 19:15** two-or-three-witness evidentiary standard governs all textual claims in this document.

HOW TO READ THIS DOCUMENT

This document applies the sole authority of the written *Tanakh* to one passage, **Numbers 27:18–23**, and to three questions about it: what its significance is, how it applies today, and who has the authority to do today what Moses did. **Yahweh** (יהוה) and **Elohim** (אֱלֹהִים) appear in bold throughout. Tanakh books and personal names are given in English. Hebrew transliterations appear in ***bold italic*** with their English meaning, also bold italic, in parentheses. Scripture references are bold. Verse numbers follow the English versions; where the Hebrew numbering differs, it is given in brackets. Scripture is rendered in a literal working translation from the Hebrew. Each finding is graded under the two-or-three-witness standard as **Corroborated** (two or more independent Tanakh witnesses), **Single witness**, or **Not in the text**. Three audiences are addressed simultaneously: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Rabbinic literature, the New Testament, church teaching, and the Qur'an and hadith appear only in the opening table, the Comparative Texts table, and the Three-Religion Audit, as historical and comparative reference — not as binding authority. The Written Tanakh governs all conclusions.

TANAKH BOOKS CITED IN THIS DOCUMENT

DIVISION	BOOKS CITED	PURPOSE IN THIS STUDY
Torah	Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy	The hand laid on the offering and on the Levites; the seventy elders; Aaron and Eleazar; the prayer of Moses and the commissioning of Joshua; the charge; the death of Moses
Nevi'im (Prophets)	Joshua, Judges, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Zechariah	The obedience of Joshua and the failure at Gibeon; the judges raised up; kings anointed; Elijah and Elisha; hands that no one sent; the shepherds and the spirit promised
Ketuvim (Writings)	Psalms, Proverbs, Ezra, Nehemiah, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles	Yahweh who upholds; majesty on the king; the charge of David to Solomon; priests without the Urim; judges appointed outside the Land

COMPARATIVE TEXTS CITED — HISTORICAL AND COMPARATIVE REFERENCE ONLY

CATEGORY	TEXTS CITED	PURPOSE IN THIS STUDY
New Testament	Acts 6:1–6; 8:14–20; 13:1–3; 14:23; 1 Timothy 4:14; 5:22; 2 Timothy 1:6; Hebrews 5:4; 6:1–2	The laying on of hands in the New Testament; choosing before commissioning; the gift that cannot be bought
Qur'an and hadith	Q. 5:23; 7:142; 18:60; 42:38; 48:10, 18; Sahih al-Bukhari 3124; Jami' at-Tirmidhi 3713	Joshua and Aaron in the Islamic witness; the pledge of allegiance; consultation; the designation claimed for Ali
Rabbinic literature and history	Mishnah Avot 1:1; Mishnah Sanhedrin 1:3; Talmud Sanhedrin 13b–14a; Talmud Bava Batra 75a; Numbers Rabbah 21:15; Rashi on Numbers 27:23; Maimonides, Laws of the Sanhedrin 4:1–3, 6, 11; the Safed ordination controversy of 1538	Ordination built on this passage; <i>“some, but not all”</i> ; the chain of tradition; the lapse of ordination, the conditions for renewing it, and the attempt that did not hold

CATEGORY	TEXTS CITED	PURPOSE IN THIS STUDY
Church law and teaching	Pius XII, <i>Sacramentum Ordinis</i> (1947); Catechism of the Catholic Church 1573, 1576; Articles of Faith 5 (Latter-day Saints)	Ordination by the laying on of hands; apostolic succession; authority claimed through the hands of those who hold it

I. FRAMING THE QUESTION — THREE QUESTIONS, ONE PASSAGE

I-A. The Questions as They Are Asked

Six verses near the end of the book of Numbers record how the care of Israel passed from Moses to Joshua. They are quoted in every tradition that ordains by the laying on of hands, and they are seldom read all the way through. Three questions have been put to this Institution:

First: what is the significance of what Moses did to Joshua?

Second: how does it apply today?

Third: who has the authority to do it today?

This study builds on earlier work in the Library and does not repeat it. **Doc 216** (*Called and Chosen*) set out the pattern this Institution follows when an elder is set apart, and rested that pattern on this passage. **Doc 265** (*Seven Offices, One King*) placed the elder beside the six other offices of the Tanakh and refined Doc 216 at four points. **Doc 230** (*Formed, Not Cloned*) cited the title “*Elohim of the spirits of all flesh*.” The present document is the first in the Library given wholly to **Numbers 27:18–23**. It reads the passage verse by verse, tests what is commonly claimed from it, and refines points in Doc 216 and Doc 265 (Section XI).

I-B. The Passage in Its Setting

The chapter has one subject from beginning to end: what passes to the next generation. It opens with the daughters of Zelophehad asking who inherits a man's land when he leaves no son (**Numbers 27:1–11**). It closes with who takes up the care of Israel when Moses dies. In both halves Moses does the same thing. He does not settle the matter himself.

“*And Moses brought their case before Yahweh*” (**Numbers 27:5**).

Between the two halves, **Yahweh** tells Moses to go up the mountain of Abarim, look at the land, and be gathered to his people as Aaron was, because of the waters of Meribah (**Numbers 27:12–14**;

compare **Numbers 20:12**). It is the fortieth year after Israel came out of Egypt (**Numbers 33:38; Deuteronomy 1:3**). Moses had pleaded to cross over and was answered, *“Enough for you; speak no more to Me of this matter”* (**Deuteronomy 3:23–26**). His next recorded words in Numbers are not for himself. They are for the flock:

“And Moses spoke to Yahweh, saying: Let Yahweh, the Elohim of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the congregation, who shall go out before them and who shall come in before them, who shall lead them out and who shall bring them in, that the congregation of Yahweh be not as sheep that have no shepherd” (**Numbers 27:15–17**).

The six verses of this study are **Yahweh**’s answer to that prayer.

I-C. The Text

“And Yahweh said to Moses: Take for yourself Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is spirit, and lay your hand upon him” (**Numbers 27:18**).

“And you shall stand him before Eleazar the priest and before all the congregation, and you shall charge him before their eyes” (**Numbers 27:19**).

“And you shall put some of your majesty upon him, so that all the congregation of the children of Israel may listen” (**Numbers 27:20**).

“And before Eleazar the priest he shall stand, and he shall inquire for him by the judgment of the Urim before Yahweh. At his word they shall go out and at his word they shall come in, he and all the children of Israel with him, and all the congregation” (**Numbers 27:21**).

“And Moses did as Yahweh commanded him. He took Joshua and stood him before Eleazar the priest and before all the congregation” (**Numbers 27:22**).

“And he laid his hands upon him and charged him, as Yahweh had spoken by the hand of Moses” (**Numbers 27:23**).

The heart of the command is eight Hebrew words: **אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר-רוּחַ בּוֹ וְסַמַּכְתָּ אֶת-יָדְךָ עָלָיו**, *ish asher ruach bo, ve-samakhta et yadekha alav* (a man in whom is spirit, and you shall lay your hand upon him).

I-D. How the Findings Are Graded

Every finding below is graded. A finding is **Corroborated** when two or more independent Tanakh witnesses carry it (**Deuteronomy 19:15**). It is a **Single witness** when only one text carries it. It is **Not in the text** when it is taught but the Tanakh does not say it.

II. THE WORD STUDY — WHAT THE HEBREW SAYS

The passage is short, and almost every word in it carries weight. The table sets out the vocabulary this study relies on.

HEBREW TERM	STRONG'S	CORE MEANING	KEY TEXT
<i>paqad (to appoint / attend to)</i> , פָּקַד	H6485	To attend to, muster, appoint. Moses asks Yahweh to appoint the man	Numbers 27:16
<i>ruach (spirit)</i> , רוּחַ	H7307	Spirit, breath, wind. What was in Joshua before the hand was laid	Numbers 27:16, 18; Deuteronomy 34:9
<i>samakh (to lay / lean upon)</i> , סָמַךְ	H5564	To lean, to rest weight upon, to uphold. The verb of the offerer's hand and of Joshua's commissioning	Leviticus 1:4; Numbers 8:10; 27:18, 23
<i>yad (hand)</i> , יָד	H3027	Hand. Singular in the command, plural in the doing	Numbers 27:18, 23
<i>amad (to stand)</i> , עָמַד	H5975	To stand. Here causative: to make him stand before priest and people	Numbers 27:19, 21–22
<i>edah (congregation)</i> , עֵדָה	H5712	The assembled congregation of Israel. Named six times in the passage and the prayer before it	Numbers 27:16–22
<i>tsivvah (to charge / command)</i> , צִוָּה	H6680	To command; to give a charge	Numbers 27:19, 23; Deuteronomy 31:23
<i>bod (majesty / splendor)</i> , הֹד	H1935	Majesty, splendor; the weight that makes others listen. Found in the Torah only here	Numbers 27:20; 1 Chronicles 29:25
<i>shama (to hear / listen)</i> , שָׁמַע	H8085	To hear and to heed. The stated purpose of the commissioning	Numbers 27:20; Deuteronomy 34:9
<i>sha'al (to ask / inquire)</i> , שָׁאַל	H7592	To ask; to inquire of Yahweh	Numbers 27:21; Joshua 9:14

HEBREW TERM	STRONG'S	CORE MEANING	KEY TEXT
<i>mishpat ha-Urim (the judgment of the Urim),</i> בְּמִשְׁפָּט הָאוּרִים	H4941 / H224	The decision given through the Urim carried by the high priest	Numbers 27:21; Exodus 28:30
<i>peh (mouth / word),</i> פֶּה	H6310	Mouth. “ <i>At his word</i> ” is literally “ <i>upon his mouth</i> ”	Numbers 27:21; Joshua 9:14
<i>mesbaret (minister / attendant),</i> מְשַׁרֵּת	H8334	One who serves another closely. Joshua’s title for forty years	Exodus 24:13; 33:11; Numbers 11:28; Joshua 1:1
<i>mashach (to anoint),</i> מָשַׁח	H4886	To anoint with oil. The verb for priests and kings, never used of Joshua	Exodus 28:41; 1 Samuel 16:13

Four lexical observations govern what follows.

First, *samakh (to lay / lean upon)* is not the word for a touch. It is the word for leaning one’s weight on something. Samson “*leaned*” on the two pillars (**Judges 16:29**). A man “*leaned his hand on the wall*” (**Amos 5:19**). The same verb says what **Yahweh** does for the one who stumbles: “*Yahweh upholds all who fall*” (**Psalms 145:14**; compare **Psalms 37:24**). When Moses lays his hand on Joshua, the picture is of weight resting on a man who must now carry it.

Second, *bod (majesty / splendor)* occurs twenty-four times in the Tanakh and only once in the five books of Moses: here. Elsewhere it belongs to **Yahweh** (**Psalms 96:6; 1 Chronicles 29:11**) and to the king He establishes (**Psalms 21:5** [Hebrew 21:6]; **1 Chronicles 29:25**). In this verse the word carries a prefix: מְהוֹדֵךְ, *me-hodekha (some of your majesty)*, literally “*from your majesty*.” Moses is told to give a part. He is not told to give the whole thing.

Third, the command and the act differ by one letter. **Yahweh** says “*your hand,*” אֶת־יָדְךָ, in the singular (**Numbers 27:18**). Moses “*laid his hands,*” אֶת־יָדָיו, in the plural (**Numbers 27:23; Deuteronomy 34:9**). The text records the difference and does not comment on it.

Fourth, the Tanakh has more than one way of setting a person into an office, and it keeps them apart. Priests and kings are anointed with oil, *mashach (to anoint)* (**Exodus 28:41; 1 Samuel 16:13**). Priests also have their “*hand filled*” (**Exodus 29:9; Leviticus 8:33**). Joshua receives neither. No oil is mentioned anywhere in his commissioning, and the Tanakh never records a hand laid on a priest, a king, an elder, or a judge to set him in office.

III. THE REQUEST — MOSES ASKS, YAHWEH APPOINTS

III-A. Moses Did Not Choose His Own Successor

The passage begins before verse 18. It begins with a prayer, and the prayer shows what Moses did not do. He had two sons, Gershom and Eliezer (**Exodus 18:3–4**). He does not name them, and the Tanakh later counts them simply among the tribe of Levi (**1 Chronicles 23:14**). Joshua was of the tribe of Ephraim (**Numbers 13:8**). The priesthood passed from father to son, from Aaron to Eleazar (**Numbers 20:25–28**). The shepherding of Israel did not.

Moses does not even name Joshua, who had served him for forty years. He asks. The verb is *paqad* (*to appoint / attend to*): “*Let Yahweh ... appoint a man over the congregation*” (**Numbers 27:16**). The choice is left entirely with **Yahweh**, and **Yahweh** makes it. Deuteronomy records the same decision three more times:

“Joshua the son of Nun, who stands before you, he shall enter there. Strengthen him, for he shall cause Israel to inherit it” (**Deuteronomy 1:38**).

“But charge Joshua, and strengthen him and make him courageous, for he shall cross over before this people” (**Deuteronomy 3:28**).

“Joshua, he is the one crossing over before you, as Yahweh has spoken” (**Deuteronomy 31:3**).

Finding: that the successor of Moses was asked of **Yahweh** and named by **Yahweh**, and was not chosen by Moses, by Joshua himself, or by the people, is **Corroborated** (**Numbers 27:15–18; Deuteronomy 1:38; 3:28; 31:3**).

III-B. The Elohim of the Spirits of All Flesh

Moses addresses **Yahweh** by a title found only twice in the Tanakh: אֱלֹהֵי הָרוּחַת לְכָל-בָּשָׂר, “*the Elohim of the spirits of all flesh*.” The first time, he and Aaron fall on their faces and plead that one man's sin does not bring wrath on the whole congregation (**Numbers 16:22**). The One who knows every spirit can tell the guilty from the innocent. The second time is here (**Numbers 27:16**). The same title now asks Him to choose the man, because He alone knows what is in a man.

“For man looks at the eyes, but Yahweh looks at the heart” (**1 Samuel 16:7**).

Yahweh's answer picks up the very word of the prayer. Moses prays to the **Elohim** of the *ruach* (*spirit*) of all flesh, and **Yahweh** points him to “*a man in whom is spirit*” (**Numbers 27:18**).

III-C. The Work: To Go Out, to Come In, to Shepherd

Moses also says what the man is for. *“To go out and to come in”* before the people is the Tanakh’s phrase for leading them, in war and in daily life. Moses uses it of himself: *“I am no longer able to go out and to come in”* (Deuteronomy 31:2). Israel loved David *“for he went out and came in before them”* (1 Samuel 18:16). Solomon confessed, *“I am but a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in”* (1 Kings 3:7).

The phrase is joined to the shepherd. The tribes said to David, *“You were the one who led Israel out and brought them in; and Yahweh said to you, You shall shepherd My people Israel”* (2 Samuel 5:2). And the picture of the flock without a shepherd, כִּצְאֵן אִשְׂרָאֵל רֶעָה, returns in the prophets: *“I saw all Israel scattered upon the mountains, like sheep that have no shepherd”* (1 Kings 22:17); *“they were scattered for lack of a shepherd”* (Ezekiel 34:5).

Finding: the office Moses asks **Yahweh** to fill is the shepherding of the whole congregation: going before them so that they are not scattered. It is not the priesthood, which Eleazar already holds, and it is not the giving of the Torah, which is finished. **Corroborated** (Numbers 27:17; Deuteronomy 31:2–3; 2 Samuel 5:2).

IV. THE MAN — A MAN IN WHOM IS SPIRIT

IV-A. Forty Years Before the Hand

Yahweh does not name a stranger. By the time of this passage the Torah has been telling Joshua’s story for forty years.

TEXT	WHAT THE TEXT RECORDS
Exodus 17:9–14	Joshua leads the battle against Amalek. Yahweh orders the record written and set <i>“in the ears of Joshua”</i>
Exodus 24:13; 32:17	He goes up the mountain with Moses as <i>“his minister”</i> and is with him when he comes down
Exodus 33:11	<i>“His minister Joshua the son of Nun, a young man, did not depart from the tent”</i>
Numbers 11:28	He is called <i>“the minister of Moses from his youth”</i>
Numbers 13:8, 16	He is sent as the spy for Ephraim. Moses renames Hoshea <i>“Joshua”</i>

TEXT	WHAT THE TEXT RECORDS
Numbers 14:6–9, 30, 38	He stands with Caleb against the ten spies and the whole congregation, and is promised entry into the land
Numbers 26:65; 32:12	Of that generation only he and Caleb remain, <i>“for they followed Yahweh fully”</i>

From the first year out of Egypt to the fortieth, the Torah's word for Joshua is *mesharet (minister / attendant)*. He was a servant before he was a leader, and he was a servant for a very long time. Even after the death of Moses, the book that bears his name introduces him as *“Joshua the son of Nun, the minister of Moses”* (Joshua 1:1). Only at his own death is he called what Moses was called: *“the servant of Yahweh”* (Joshua 24:29; compare Deuteronomy 34:5).

IV-B. The Spirit Came First

Yahweh describes him in four words: **אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר־רוּחַ בּוֹ**, *ish asher ruach bo (a man in whom is spirit)*. Pharaoh used nearly the same words of Joseph: *“a man in whom is the spirit of Elohim”* (Genesis 41:38). Of Joshua's companion, **Yahweh** said, *“My servant Caleb, because a different spirit was with him, and he followed Me fully”* (Numbers 14:24).

The order of the verse matters. **Yahweh** does not say, Lay your hand on him and he will receive spirit. He says, Take a man in whom spirit already is, and lay your hand on him. The hand did not make the man. It marked him.

Finding: that spirit and proven faithfulness were in Joshua before the hand was laid is **Corroborated** (Numbers 27:18; 32:12; Numbers 14:6–9; Exodus 33:11). That the laying on of hands made an untested man fit to lead is **Not in the text**.

V. THE COMMISSIONING — THE ACTS IN THEIR ORDER

Yahweh gives Moses a sequence of acts, and the passage ends by saying Moses did them. Each is taken in turn.

V-A. Take: Yahweh Names the Man

“Take for yourself Joshua the son of Nun” (Numbers 27:18). Moses takes, but only the man he is told to take. The fulfillment repeats it: *“He took Joshua”* (Numbers 27:22). Everything else in the passage rests on this first act. Without it, the rest would be a ceremony performed on a man of Moses' own choosing.

V-B. Lay Your Hand: What the Hand Means

Tanakh never explains the gesture in a sentence. What it gives is a set of settings in which a hand is laid, always with the verb *samakb* (*to lay / lean upon*). The table gathers all of them.

WHO LAYS THE HAND	ON WHAT OR WHOM	TEXT	WHAT FOLLOWS
The one bringing an offering	The head of the animal	Leviticus 1:4; 3:2; 4:4	<i>“It shall be accepted for him”</i>
The elders of the congregation; the king and the assembly	The sin offering for the people	Leviticus 4:15; 2 Chronicles 29:23	Atonement is made for the whole congregation
Aaron, with both his hands	The live goat	Leviticus 16:21	He confesses the iniquities of Israel over it and sends it away
All who heard the blasphemy	The head of the one who cursed	Leviticus 24:14	The congregation carries out the sentence
The children of Israel	The Levites	Numbers 8:10	Aaron presents the Levites to serve in place of the firstborn (Numbers 8:11, 16–19)
Moses	Joshua	Numbers 27:18, 23; Deuteronomy 34:9	Joshua stands before the congregation in Moses' place

What the settings share can be seen. In each, the one who leans his hand ties himself openly to the one leaned upon, and something passes between them in the sight of others: the offerer's standing to the offering, the hearers' testimony to the accused, Israel's firstborn service to the Levites. With Joshua the text itself names what passes: Moses' charge and *“some of your majesty”* (**Numbers 27:19–20**).

Two things the hand is not. It is not the hand of blessing. When Jacob blesses Ephraim and Manasseh he *“set”* his hands on their heads, and the verbs are different ones (**Genesis 48:14, 17–18**); when Aaron blesses the people he *“lifted”* his hands toward them (**Leviticus 9:22**). And it is not anointing, as the word study showed.

Finding: that Moses laid his hands on Joshua at the command of **Yahweh** is **Corroborated** by two books (**Numbers 27:23; Deuteronomy 34:9**). That the act was a blessing or an anointing is **Not in the text**.

V-C. Stand Him Before the Priest and the Congregation

Two parties must see it: Eleazar the priest and *“all the congregation.”* The word *edah* (*congregation*) is named six times in **Numbers 27:16–22**. The commissioning is done *“before their eyes”* (**Numbers 27:19**), and the reason is stated: *“so that all the congregation of the children of Israel may listen”* (**Numbers 27:20**). A people cannot follow a man they did not see commissioned.

The other transfers of the Torah are public in the same way. Aaron's garments were put on Eleazar *“before the eyes of all the congregation”* (**Numbers 20:27**). Moses repeated Joshua's charge *“before the eyes of all Israel”* (**Deuteronomy 31:7**). Samuel presented Saul to all the people: *“Do you see him whom Yahweh has chosen?”* (**1 Samuel 10:24**). This is the witness standard applied to leadership: a matter stands on the mouth of two or three witnesses (**Deuteronomy 19:15**), and here the witnesses are the priest and the whole people.

Finding: that the commissioning was public, before the priest and the whole congregation, is **Corroborated** (**Numbers 27:19, 22; Deuteronomy 31:7; Numbers 20:27**). A private or secret commissioning to lead the people of Yahweh is **Not in the text**.

V-D. Charge Him Before Their Eyes

The verb is *tsivvah* (*to charge / command*): וְצִוִּיתָה אֹתוֹ לְעֵינֵיהֶם, *“and you shall charge him before their eyes.”* Numbers does not record the words of the charge. Deuteronomy and Joshua do.

SPEAKER	TEXT	THE WORDS
Yahweh to Moses	Deuteronomy 3:28	<i>“Charge Joshua, and strengthen him and make him courageous”</i>
Moses to Joshua, before all Israel	Deuteronomy 31:7–8	<i>“Be strong and courageous, for you shall go with this people into the land ... And Yahweh, He is the one who goes before you; He will be with you; He will not fail you nor forsake you”</i>
Yahweh to Joshua, at the Tent of Meeting	Deuteronomy 31:14, 23	<i>“Be strong and courageous, for you shall bring the children of Israel into the land which I swore to them, and I will be with you”</i>
Yahweh to Joshua, after the death of Moses	Joshua 1:6–9	<i>“Only be strong and very courageous, to keep and to do according to all the Torah which Moses My servant commanded you”</i>

Three things are in every form of the charge: a task (bring the people in and cause them to inherit the land), a promise (Yahweh goes before you), and a command to courage, **חֲזַק וְאַמֵּץ**, *chazaq ve-emats* (*be strong and courageous*). Yahweh does not leave the charge to Moses alone. He calls both men to the Tent, *“that I may charge him”* (Deuteronomy 31:14), and speaks it Himself. In its last form the charge adds the thing that governs all the rest:

“Do not turn from it to the right or to the left ... This book of the Torah shall not depart from your mouth, and you shall meditate on it day and night, that you may keep and do according to all that is written in it” (Joshua 1:7–8).

The man who received Moses' hand was bound to Moses' book. The record of his life says he kept it: *“As Yahweh commanded Moses His servant, so Moses commanded Joshua, and so Joshua did; he left nothing undone of all that Yahweh commanded Moses”* (Joshua 11:15). *“There was not a word of all that Moses commanded which Joshua did not read before all the assembly of Israel”* (Joshua 8:35).

Two things were handed on at the end of Moses' life, and they went to different hands. The leading of the people went to one man, by the laying on of hands. The Torah went in writing *“to the priests, the sons of Levi ... and to all the elders of Israel,”* to be read in the ears of all Israel and laid up beside the ark (Deuteronomy 31:9–13, 24–26). Joshua was never the sole keeper of the Torah. He was its first reader and its first servant.

Finding: that the commissioning carried a spoken charge, and that the charge bound Joshua to the written Torah, is **Corroborated** (Numbers 27:19, 23; Deuteronomy 31:7–8, 23; Joshua 1:7–8).

V-E. Put Some of Your Majesty Upon Him

וּנְתַתָּה מִהוֹדָךְ עָלָיו, *“and you shall put some of your majesty upon him.”* The verse defines the word by its purpose: *“so that all the congregation of the children of Israel may listen.”* *Hod* (*majesty / splendor*) here is the standing that makes a people heed a man. Moses had it, and Israel had to see that Joshua now carried a share of it.

The purpose was met. *“And the children of Israel listened to him, and did as Yahweh had commanded Moses”* (Deuteronomy 34:9). The people answered Joshua, *“As we listened to Moses in all things, so we will listen to you; only may Yahweh your Elohim be with you, as He was with Moses”* (Joshua 1:17). Even their pledge carries a condition.

Who, then, gave Joshua his standing? Moses is told to *“put”* it on him. But when the narrative reaches the Jordan, the giver is named:

“This day I will begin to magnify you in the eyes of all Israel, that they may know that as I was with Moses, so I will be with you” (Joshua 3:7).

“On that day Yahweh magnified Joshua in the eyes of all Israel, and they feared him as they had feared Moses, all the days of his life” (Joshua 4:14).

The same is said of Solomon, with the same word: *“Yahweh magnified Solomon exceedingly in the eyes of all Israel, and put upon him a royal majesty,”* 1) וַיִּתֵּן עָלָיו הוֹד מְלָכוּת (Chronicles 29:25). Both statements stand. The public act of Moses told Israel whom to follow. The acts of **Yahweh** at the Jordan proved it.

And it was only *“some.”* The Torah closes by saying so: *“And there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses, whom Yahweh knew face to face”* (Deuteronomy 34:10). With other prophets **Yahweh** speaks in a vision or a dream; with Moses, *“mouth to mouth”* (Numbers 12:6–8). That did not pass to Joshua.

Finding: that Joshua received a share of Moses' majesty and not the whole, for the stated purpose that the congregation would listen, and that **Yahweh** Himself confirmed it, is **Corroborated** (Numbers 27:20; Deuteronomy 34:9–10; Joshua 3:7; 4:14).

V-F. He Shall Stand Before Eleazar: The Limit

Verse 21 is the verse most often left out when this passage is quoted. It is a limit laid on Joshua in the same breath as his commissioning.

Moses brought hard matters straight to **Yahweh** (Numbers 27:5). Joshua is told to stand before the priest: וְשָׁאַל לוֹ בְּמִשְׁפַּט הָאוּרִים לִפְנֵי יְהוָה, *“and he shall inquire for him by the judgment of the Urim before Yahweh.”* The Urim were kept in the breastpiece of judgment on the heart of the high priest (Exodus 28:30). Then comes the phrase עַל-פִּיו, *al piv (at his word)*, literally *“upon his mouth”*: *“At his word they shall go out and at his word they shall come in.”* The *“his”* may be read of Eleazar, who speaks the answer, or of **Yahweh**, who gives it. On either reading it is not Joshua's own. The going out and coming in that Moses prayed about (Numbers 27:17) is to be done by a word the leader does not originate.

The narrative that follows bears this out. Whenever the land is divided, Eleazar is named before Joshua (Numbers 32:28; 34:17; Joshua 14:1; 19:51; 21:1), and the dividing is done *“before Yahweh, at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting”* (Joshua 19:51). The one time the text says Israel's leaders acted without asking is the treaty with Gibeon:

“And the men took of their provisions, and they did not ask the mouth of Yahweh” (Joshua 9:14).

The Hebrew is **וְאֶת־פִּי יְהוָה לֹא שָׁאֲלוּ**, and it uses the two words of **Numbers 27:21**: *peh (mouth / word)* and *sha'al (to ask / inquire)*. The result was an oath sworn to men who had deceived them (**Joshua 9:15–18**). After Joshua's death Israel went back to asking: *“the children of Israel asked of Yahweh, saying, Who shall go up for us first?”* (**Judges 1:1**). In the days of Phinehas the son of Eleazar they were still asking before the ark (**Judges 20:27–28**).

Two honest notes belong here. **Yahweh** also spoke to Joshua directly, many times (**Joshua 1:1; 3:7; 7:10; 8:1**), so the priest was not his only way of hearing. And the book of Joshua never names the Urim. The particular instrument rests on this one verse.

Finding: that Joshua, though commissioned, was to move the congregation by a word sought from **Yahweh**, and that he stood beside the priest and not over him, is **Corroborated** (**Numbers 27:21; 34:17; Joshua 9:14; 19:51**). That the inquiry was to be made by the Urim is a **Single witness** (**Numbers 27:21**).

V-G. And Moses Did as Yahweh Commanded

The passage ends in obedience. Moses takes the man, stands him before priest and people, lays his hands on him, and charges him, *“as Yahweh had spoken”* (**Numbers 27:22–23**). He adds nothing of his own and leaves nothing out. The closing phrase is **בְּיַד־מֹשֶׁה**, *be-yad Mosheh (by the hand of Moses)*. The Torah uses it again and again for the word of **Yahweh** coming through Moses, and a psalm uses it for his shepherding: *“You led Your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron”* (**Psalms 77:20** [Hebrew 77:21]). The hands laid on Joshua were the hands through which **Yahweh** had spoken to Israel and led it. Moses is himself under command in the very act of handing on command.

VI. THE SIGNIFICANCE — WHAT PASSED TO JOSHUA AND WHAT DID NOT

Read as a whole, the passage answers the first question. Its significance lies as much in what did not pass as in what did.

VI-A. What Passed and What Did Not

	WHAT THE TEXT SAYS	TEXT
Passed	The leading of the congregation: going out and coming in before them	Numbers 27:17, 21; Deuteronomy 31:3

	WHAT THE TEXT SAYS	TEXT
Passed	The task of bringing Israel in and causing them to inherit the land	Deuteronomy 1:38; 3:28; 31:7; Joshua 1:6
Passed	A share of Moses' majesty, so that Israel listened to him	Numbers 27:20; Deuteronomy 34:9; Joshua 4:14
Passed	The charge, binding him to the written Torah	Numbers 27:19, 23; Joshua 1:7–8
Did not pass	Moses' rank as prophet: mouth to mouth, face to face	Numbers 12:6–8; Deuteronomy 34:10
Did not pass	The priesthood, which stayed with Eleazar and his line	Numbers 20:25–28; 27:21
Did not pass	Freedom from inquiry: Joshua must ask	Numbers 27:21; Joshua 9:14
Did not pass	Authority over the Torah: he keeps and reads what is written	Joshua 1:7–8; 8:35; 11:15; 23:6
Did not pass	A line of successors: he lays his hands on no one	Joshua 23:2; 24:1; Judges 2:7–10

VI-B. Deuteronomy 34:9 — The Hand and the Spirit

One verse outside the passage looks back on it, and it must be read with care.

“And Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands upon him; and the children of Israel listened to him and did as Yahweh had commanded Moses” (Deuteronomy 34:9).

The Hebrew is מִלֵּא רוּחַ חָכְמָה כִּי־סִמָּךְ מֹשֶׁה אֶת־יְדָיו עָלָיו. The verse joins its parts with the word *ki* (*for / because*), and two readings are possible. In the first, “*for*” explains the fullness: the spirit of wisdom filled Joshua because Moses laid his hands on him. In the second, “*for*” explains what follows: because Moses had laid his hands on him, the children of Israel listened. The text allows both. What cannot be read out of the verse is that the spirit was absent until the hand came, because **Numbers 27:18** says plainly that it was in him already. Whatever the hand added, it added to a man in whom spirit already was.

The phrase *ruach chokhmah* (*spirit of wisdom*), רִיחַ חֲכָמָה, appears elsewhere with its giver named. Of the craftsmen who made Aaron's garments **Yahweh** says, *"whom I have filled with the spirit of wisdom"* (Exodus 28:3). Of the shoot from the stock of Jesse: *"the spirit of Yahweh shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding"* (Isaiah 11:2). In both, the giver is **Yahweh**.

Finding: that Joshua was full of the spirit of wisdom, and that the text connects this with the hands of Moses, is carried by **Deuteronomy 34:9** alone: a **Single witness**. That **Yahweh** is the giver of the spirit is **Corroborated** (Exodus 28:3; Numbers 11:17, 25; Isaiah 11:2). That a human hand gives the spirit by its own power, or at the will of the one who lays it, is **Not in the text**.

VI-C. Joshua Laid His Hands on No One

The Tanakh tells the end of Joshua's life in detail, and what is missing from it is as plain as what is there. He gathers *"all Israel, its elders and its heads and its judges and its officers"* twice (Joshua 23:2; 24:1). He charges them *"to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the Torah of Moses"* (Joshua 23:6). He renews the covenant at Shechem. He lays his hands on no one, and he names no successor.

What follows is told without softening. Israel served **Yahweh** all the days of Joshua and of the elders who outlived him (Judges 2:7). Then *"another generation arose after them who did not know Yahweh, nor the work which He had done for Israel"* (Judges 2:10). Leadership did not come down a line of hands. It came this way:

"And Yahweh raised up judges, and they saved them from the hand of those who plundered them" (Judges 2:16).

Of the first of them, Othniel: *"Yahweh raised up a deliverer ... and the spirit of Yahweh came upon him"* (Judges 3:9–10). Of the last, Samuel: *"all Israel from Dan to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established as a prophet of Yahweh"* (1 Samuel 3:20). Not one of them is said to have received the laying on of hands from anyone.

Finding: that the laying on of hands was handed down as a chain from Moses through Joshua to later generations is **Not in the text**. That the leaders after Joshua were raised up by **Yahweh** directly is **Corroborated** (Judges 2:16; 3:9–10; 1 Samuel 3:20).

VI-D. The Significance Stated

First: the flock belongs to **Yahweh**, so the shepherd is His to appoint. Moses asks; **Yahweh** names (Numbers 27:15–18).

Second: the leading of Israel is not family property and not a calling a man gives himself. It did not go to Moses' sons, and Joshua did not put himself forward.

Third: the handing on was done in the open, while Moses lived, so that Israel would know whom to follow and there would be no contest at his death. There was none (**Deuteronomy 34:9; Joshua 1:16–17**).

Fourth: authority handed on is partial, and it stays under authority. Joshua received some of the majesty, stood beside the priest, asked before he acted, and kept the book.

Fifth: the hand is a sign of what **Yahweh** had already decided and already given. It is not the source of either.

VII. THE OTHER TRANSFERS OF THE TANAKH

Joshua's commissioning is not the only time the Tanakh shows an office or a charge passing from one to another. Set side by side, the transfers show what is constant and what is not.

TRANSFER	SIGN OR ACT	WHO CHOSE	TEXT
Moses to the heads and judges	Known men put forward and set over the people. No hand, no oil	The tribes put them forward; Moses appointed	Exodus 18:21–25; Deuteronomy 1:13–15
Israel to the Levites	The children of Israel lay their hands on them; Aaron presents them	Yahweh: <i>“the Levites shall be Mine”</i>	Numbers 8:9–19
Moses to the seventy elders	Yahweh takes the spirit on Moses and puts it on them. No hand	Men Moses knew to be elders; Yahweh gave the spirit	Numbers 11:16–17, 24–29
Aaron to Eleazar	The garments moved from father to son, before all the congregation	Yahweh , by birth in Aaron's line	Numbers 20:25–28
Moses to Joshua	The laying on of hands, a charge, a share of majesty	Yahweh named him	Numbers 27:18–23; Deuteronomy 34:9
Joshua to no one	No act recorded	Yahweh raised up judges	Joshua 24:29–31; Judges 2:10, 16
Samuel to Saul and to David	Oil; Saul presented to the people	Yahweh	1 Samuel 10:1, 24; 16:13

TRANSFER	SIGN OR ACT	WHO CHOSE	TEXT
David to Solomon	Oil from the Tent by Zadok the priest; a charge from David	Yahweh: <i>“He has chosen Solomon my son”</i>	1 Kings 1:39; 2:1–4; 1 Chronicles 28:5, 20; 29:22–25
Elijah to Elisha	The mantle; the spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha	Yahweh named him	1 Kings 19:16, 19; 2 Kings 2:9–15
The prophets	A direct call, with no predecessor	Yahweh	Amos 7:15; Jeremiah 1:5

Four observations follow.

First, the sign changes with the office. The priest receives garments, the king oil, the prophet a mantle, Joshua a hand. The Tanakh has no single rite for placing a person in office.

Second, in every transfer **Yahweh** chooses or **Yahweh** gives. Even where the people put men forward, the standard they must meet is His (**Exodus 18:21**).

Third, every transfer is public or publicly confirmed. The sons of the prophets saw Elisha and said, *“The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha”* (2 Kings 2:15).

Fourth, the one who hands on cannot give what is **Yahweh**'s to give. When Elisha asked for a double portion of his spirit, Elijah answered, *“You have asked a hard thing. If you see me when I am taken from you, it shall be so for you; and if not, it shall not be”* (2 Kings 2:9–10). David's charge to Solomon borrows the very words of Moses to Joshua, *“Be strong and courageous ... He will not fail you nor forsake you”* (1 Chronicles 28:20), and still the text says it was **Yahweh** who put royal majesty on him (1 Chronicles 29:25).

Finding: that **Yahweh** chose or gave in every transfer of office is **Corroborated** on every line of the table. That a leader laid his hands on his successor is recorded of one event, told in two books (**Numbers 27:23; Deuteronomy 34:9**). That this act was made a standing ordinance for every later office is **Not in the text**.

VIII. HOW DOES IT APPLY TODAY?

VIII-A. What Cannot Be Repeated as Written

The commissioning of Joshua was built into a structure, and the passage names each part of it. The table sets out what the text requires and where things stand.

WHAT THE PASSAGE REQUIRES	TEXT	PRESENT CONDITION
Yahweh names the man by a direct word	Numbers 27:18	No prophet like Moses has arisen (Deuteronomy 34:10). One is promised (Deuteronomy 18:15, 18)
A leader in Moses' place , with majesty to share	Numbers 27:20	No one holds it. Israel remains <i>“many days without king and without prince”</i> (Hosea 3:4)
Eleazar the priest standing by	Numbers 27:19, 22	No priest of proven descent serves; those who could not show their record were set aside (Ezra 2:62)
Inquiry by the Urim	Numbers 27:21	Not available since the return from exile: <i>“until a priest should stand with Urim and with Thummim”</i> (Ezra 2:63; Nehemiah 7:65)
All the congregation of Israel gathered	Numbers 27:19–22	The covenant people are scattered among the peoples; their gathering is promised (Deuteronomy 30:3)

It follows that **Numbers 27:18–23** cannot be carried out today as it is written. No one stands where Moses stood, no priest carries the Urim, and no one has been named by a direct word of **Yahweh** to shepherd the whole congregation. Anyone who says he is doing what Moses did in this passage is claiming more than the Tanakh gives him.

VIII-B. What Remains — Seven Standing Principles

The structure is absent. The pattern is not. Each part of it rests on more than one witness, and none of them depends on the Tent or the Urim.

PRINCIPLE	WHAT IT MEANS NOW	WITNESSES
1. Ask Yahweh for the shepherd	A people without a leader prays the prayer of Moses before it does anything else. It does not begin with a candidate	Numbers 27:15–17; Jeremiah 3:15; 23:4
2. The man is proven first	Long and visible service comes before any setting apart. No one is commissioned on promise, or on his own word about himself	Numbers 27:18; Exodus 18:21; Deuteronomy 1:13

PRINCIPLE	WHAT IT MEANS NOW	WITNESSES
3. It is done in the open	Before those who teach and before the whole assembly, so that all are witnesses	Numbers 27:19; Deuteronomy 31:7; 19:15
4. A charge is spoken	The one set apart is told plainly what he is to do, and is bound to the written covenant	Deuteronomy 31:7–8; Joshua 1:7–8; 1 Kings 2:1–4
5. Authority is shared in part	The one who hands on holds nothing back out of jealousy, and gives nothing he does not have	Numbers 27:20; 11:29; Deuteronomy 34:10
6. The leader stays under authority	He asks before he acts, and anyone may test him by the written word	Numbers 27:21; Joshua 9:14; Deuteronomy 17:18–20; Isaiah 8:20
7. The next generation is prepared early	The older trains the younger for years before the day of handing on	Exodus 24:13; 33:11; Deuteronomy 6:7; Psalms 78:5–7

The fifth principle has a story behind it. When two men prophesied in the camp and Joshua, still a young minister, wanted them stopped, Moses answered: *“Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the people of Yahweh were prophets, that Yahweh would put His spirit upon them!”* (Numbers 11:29). The man who could say that was the right man to share his majesty.

The sixth is written into the law of the king. He is to write for himself a copy of the Torah and read it all his days, *“that his heart be not lifted up above his brothers, and that he not turn aside from the commandment to the right or to the left”* (Deuteronomy 17:18–20). They are nearly the words spoken to Joshua (Joshua 1:7).

VIII-C. In the Assembly and in the Household

In the assembly. The Torah's own way of placing elders and judges used no rite at all: *“Provide for yourselves wise, understanding, and known men, according to your tribes, and I will set them as your heads”* (Deuteronomy 1:13). The Tanakh neither commands nor forbids a hand laid on such a man. A covenant community that sets apart an elder or a teacher with the laying on of hands is borrowing a sign from the commissioning of Joshua.

It may do so honestly on three conditions:

1. that it calls the act what it is, a public sign of recognition and charge;
2. that it claims no power to give the spirit;
3. and that it claims neither the authority of Moses nor a line of hands reaching back to him.

In the household. The plainest application belongs to every home. The last thing David did for Solomon was to charge him, in the words of Moses (**1 Chronicles 28:20**), and to bind him to what is *“written in the Torah of Moses”* (**1 Kings 2:3**). Abraham was known by Yahweh *“so that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of Yahweh”* (**Genesis 18:19**). Every father and mother already hold this charge: *“You shall teach them diligently to your children”* (**Deuteronomy 6:7**); *“Hear, my son, the instruction of your father, and do not forsake the torah of your mother”* (**Proverbs 1:8**). No one needs a title to give it.

VIII-D. The Warning: Hands No One Sent

The Tanakh also records what happens when the outward act is kept and the first step is skipped. The Torah's phrase for installing a priest is *mille yad (to fill the hand)* (**Exodus 28:41**). In the days of the judges a man named Micah did it for himself:

“And the man Micah had a house of gods; and he made an ephod and teraphim, and filled the hand of one of his sons, and he became his priest” (**Judges 17:5**).

The Hebrew is **וַיִּמְלֵא אֶת־יָד**, the very phrase of the Torah, and Micah later did the same for a wandering Levite (**Judges 17:12**). The next verse gives the Tanakh's judgment on it: *“In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his own eyes”* (**Judges 17:6**).

Jeroboam did it for a kingdom. He *“made priests from among all the people, who were not of the sons of Levi”*; *“whoever desired, he filled his hand”*; *“and this thing became sin to the house of Jeroboam”* (**1 Kings 12:31; 13:33–34**). Korah reached for it: *“and do you seek the priesthood also?”* (**Numbers 16:10**). The prophets say the same of prophets, kings, and shepherds:

“I did not send the prophets, yet they ran; I did not speak to them, yet they prophesied” (**Jeremiah 23:21**).

“They have set up kings, but not from Me; they have made princes, and I did not know” (**Hosea 8:4**).

“Woe to the shepherds of Israel who have been feeding themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flock?” (**Ezekiel 34:2**).

In every one of these a rite was performed or an office was held. What was missing is the thing **Numbers 27:18** begins with. Yahweh had not named the man.

Finding: that an office-holder may install whom he pleases, or that a man may install himself, is judged wherever it appears. **Corroborated** (Judges 17:5–6; 1 Kings 13:33–34; Jeremiah 23:21; Hosea 8:4).

IX. WHO HAS THE AUTHORITY TO DO IT TODAY?

IX-A. Who Had It Then

Inside the passage, authority runs in one direction. **Yahweh** chose (Numbers 27:18). Moses acted “*as Yahweh commanded him*” (Numbers 27:22). Eleazar and the congregation witnessed (Numbers 27:19). Joshua received.

Even Moses did not have authority to do this on his own. He had to ask (Numbers 27:15–17), and he could do it only for the man who was named. The greatest prophet in the Tanakh could not appoint his own successor by his own choice. Any answer to the third question has to begin there.

IX-B. Three Claims Tested

The first claim — that authority today comes down an unbroken line of ordained hands reaching back to Moses. The Tanakh’s own history does not contain the line. Joshua laid his hands on no one (Joshua 23:2; 24:1). The generation after his elders “*did not know Yahweh*” (Judges 2:10), which is the very thing an unbroken chain would exist to prevent. The leaders who came after were raised up by **Yahweh** one at a time (Judges 2:16). **Not in the text.**

The second claim — that the hands of an ordained man give the spirit, a gift, or an office to the one they touch. The passage itself says the spirit was in Joshua first (Numbers 27:18). When the spirit came on the seventy elders, “*Yahweh came down in the cloud ... and He took of the spirit that was upon him and put it upon the seventy men, the elders*” (Numbers 11:25); Moses’ hands are not mentioned. Elijah could not promise Elisha what he asked (2 Kings 2:10). And the promises for the days to come name one giver: “*I will put My spirit within you*” (Ezekiel 36:27); “*I will pour out My spirit upon all flesh*” (Joel 2:28 [Hebrew 3:1]); “*Not by might and not by power, but by My spirit, says Yahweh of hosts*” (Zechariah 4:6). The one verse that joins a hand to the spirit, Deuteronomy 34:9, speaks of Moses, acting on a direct command, toward a man already named. As a power that men hold and pass along, it is **Not in the text.**

The third claim — that a man who believes himself called may set himself apart, or be set apart in private by a friend or a family member. Every text in Section VIII-D answers it: Micah, Jeroboam, Korah, the prophets who ran without being sent. **Not in the text**, and judged wherever it appears.

IX-C. The Answer, Question by Question

QUESTION	THE TANAKH'S ANSWER	BASIS
Who may name a shepherd over the whole covenant people?	Yahweh alone. No one holds this today. He has promised to do it Himself	Numbers 27:16–18; Jeremiah 3:15; Ezekiel 34:23; 37:24
Who may carry out Numbers 27:18–23 as it is written?	No one, until a prophet like Moses and a priest with Urim stand again	Deuteronomy 18:15; 34:10; Ezra 2:63
Who may give the spirit?	Yahweh alone	Numbers 11:25, 29; Ezekiel 36:27; Zechariah 4:6
Who may recognize known and tested men and set them apart to serve a covenant community?	The community itself, together with those who already bear the charge among them	Deuteronomy 1:13–15; Exodus 18:21–25; Numbers 8:9–10; Ezra 7:25
Who may lay a hand on such a man as a sign?	Those who already serve, in the sight of the community; or the community, upon those who will serve in its place. As a sign of recognition and charge, and not as a source of power	Numbers 27:18–19; 8:10
Who may charge the next generation?	Every father and mother, and everyone who teaches the covenant	Genesis 18:19; Deuteronomy 6:7; Proverbs 1:8; 1 Kings 2:1–4

The fourth line needs a word of explanation. The Torah shows authority moving in two directions, and it keeps both. From the one who leads: Moses appoints the heads (**Deuteronomy 1:15**), and Moses lays his hands on Joshua (**Numbers 27:23**). From the people: the tribes put forward their own known men (**Deuteronomy 1:13**), and it is the children of Israel who lay their hands on the Levites: **וְסָמְכוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־יְדֵיהֶם עַל־הַלְוִיִּם** (**Numbers 8:10**). Neither direction stands alone. Moses does not set strangers over the tribes, and the tribes do not install a man over the head of the one who already bears the charge. The same held outside the land. Ezra was told to appoint judges from among *“all such as know the laws of your Elohim”* (**Ezra 7:25**).

Finding — who has the authority today: the authority to name a shepherd over the whole people of Yahweh, to share the majesty of Moses, or to give the spirit belongs to Yahweh and is held by no man, no court, and no institution today. **Corroborated (Numbers 27:16–18; Deuteronomy 34:10; Ezekiel 34:23; Ezra 2:63).** The authority to recognize known and tested men and set them apart in public, under the written covenant, belongs to a covenant community together with those who already serve it. **Corroborated (Deuteronomy 1:13–15; Numbers 8:9–10; Ezra 7:25).** That any person holds authority by a chain of hands from Moses, or by a private or self-made ordination, is **Not in the text.**

IX-D. The Standard Applied to This Institution

Miqdash Bethel applies the same standard to itself. Its founder holds the title of Elder, and its practice of setting apart elders by the laying on of hands (Doc 216) follows the pattern of Joshua's commissioning: a known and tested man, a public act, a charge. By the findings of this study that practice is a sign of recognition and charge, and it is no more than that.

1. This Institution does not claim the place of Moses.
2. It does not claim that its hands give the spirit.
3. It does not claim a line of ordination reaching back to Moses; Doc 216 already said so.
4. It holds no Urim, and it names no shepherd over the whole covenant people.

Every person it sets apart, and its founder with them, remains under the written covenant and may be tested by it by anyone (Isaiah 8:20).

IX-E. Four Questions for Anyone Who Lays On Hands

First: who chose this man? Tanakh's answer is never *“he chose himself,”* and never *“I chose him because he is mine”* (Numbers 27:16–18; Jeremiah 23:21).

Second: was he known and proven before the hand was laid? (Numbers 27:18; Exodus 18:21; Deuteronomy 1:13)

Third: was it done in the open, before those who teach and before the people? (Numbers 27:19; Deuteronomy 19:15)

Fourth: what does he remain under? A man who answers to no priest, no people, and no book has not received what Joshua received (Numbers 27:21; Joshua 1:7–8; Deuteronomy 17:18–20).

X. THREE-RELIGION AUDIT — HOW EACH TRADITION HANDLES THE LAYING ON OF HANDS

The table sets the three traditions against the Tanakh's own findings. Comparative texts are cited as historical reference only, in keeping with the standing rule of this document.

ELEMENT	☆ JUDAISM	† CHRISTIANITY	☉ ISLAM
Practice today	Rabbinic tradition builds <i>semikhab</i> (<i>ordination by the laying on of hands</i>) on this passage (Maimonides, Laws of the Sanhedrin 4:1). It required three (Mishnah Sanhedrin 1:3), one of them ordained, and could be given only in the Land (Talmud Sanhedrin 13b–14a; Maimonides 4:3, 6). For later generations no hand was laid: the candidate was called “ <i>Rabbi</i> ” (4:2). That ordination lapsed in late antiquity, and the attempt to renew it at Safed in 1538 did not hold. Rabbinic ordination today is a certificate of permission to teach and to rule.	Hands were laid on the seven (Acts 6:6), on Barnabas and Saul (Acts 13:3), and on Timothy by the body of elders (1 Timothy 4:14); “ <i>the laying on of hands</i> ” is listed among first teachings (Hebrews 6:2). Catholic and Orthodox churches ordained by the bishop’s hands (Pius XII, 1947; Catechism 1573), valid only in apostolic succession (Catechism 1576). Most Protestant churches are ordained through elders or the congregation. Some lay on hands to impart gifts. Latter-day Saints require a call “ <i>by the laying on of hands by those who are in authority</i> ” (Articles of Faith 5).	Tradition identifies Joshua as the young servant of Moses (Q. 18:60) and as the prophet for whom the sun was held back (Sahih al-Bukhari 3124). Islam has no ordination by hands. A ruler is acknowledged by <i>bay’ah</i> (<i>pledge of allegiance</i>), a clasp of the hand (Q. 48:10, 18). Sunni teaching rests leadership on choice and consultation (Q. 42:38); Shi’a teaching rests on designation, citing Ghadir Khumm (Jami’ at-Tirmidhi 3713). Teachers are licensed by <i>ijazah</i> (<i>permission</i>) through a named chain.

ELEMENT	☆ JUDAISM	† CHRISTIANITY	C* ISLAM
Covenant strength	It keeps the <i>“some”</i> of Numbers 27:20: some of Moses' honor <i>“but not all”</i> (Bava Batra 75a). It admits that its ordination lapsed, and it will not restore the court without the Land and the agreement of its sages (Maimonides 4:11). That is the waiting posture of Ezra 2:63.	The seven were first chosen by the congregation as men <i>“of good report, full of the Spirit and of wisdom,”</i> and only then were hands laid on them (Acts 6:3–6): the order of Numbers 27:18 and Deuteronomy 1:13. <i>“Do not lay hands on anyone hastily”</i> (1 Timothy 5:22). A man who offered money for the power to give the Spirit by his hands was rebuked (Acts 8:18–20). No one takes the honor to himself (Hebrews 5:4).	Islam does not claim that a rite gives the spirit, and the pledge is public. Moses' charge to Aaron, <i>“Take my place among my people, and do right, and do not follow the way of the corrupters”</i> (Q. 7:142), shows a deputy receiving a charge, as in Numbers 27:19. Between them the Sunni and Shi'a positions hold what the Torah holds together: designation from above and recognition by the people.
Covenant departure	Mishnah Avot 1:1 makes the handing on from Moses to Joshua the first link in passing down an oral Torah, from Joshua to the elders and onward. The Tanakh binds Joshua to <i>“all that is written”</i> (Joshua 1:8) and records no hand laid by Joshua on the elders (Judges 2:7–10). Maimonides 4:1 says Moses also ordained the seventy elders; Numbers 11:25 records no hand. The picture of kindling lamp from lamp (Numbers Rabbah 21:15), and of Moses filling Joshua with his own wisdom (Rashi on Numbers 27:23), go beyond what is written.	That the rite itself confers the office, and that its validity depends on an unbroken line of ordaining hands, has no witness in the Tanakh: Joshua laid his hands on no one (Section VI-C). Laying on hands to impart the spirit claims for men what the Tanakh gives to Yahweh alone (Numbers 11:25; Ezekiel 36:27). A claim to exclusive authority through the hands of those <i>“in authority”</i> meets the same test.	In the pledge the hand goes from the people to a ruler, and obedience is then owed to him. The Tanakh's commissioned leader is himself placed under the priest's inquiry and the written Torah (Numbers 27:21; Joshua 1:7–8). A designation by raised hand and a chain of named transmitters are each given a binding weight the Tanakh gives to neither.

ELEMENT	☆ JUDAISM	† CHRISTIANITY	☩ ISLAM
Covenant witness	The tradition's own picture of the sun and the moon agrees with the text. The moon has no light of its own. Authority that is handed on is borrowed authority.	Read from the Tanakh outward, Acts 6:3–6 shows both directions of Deuteronomy 1:13–15 and Numbers 8:10 : the people choose known men, and those who already serve set them apart.	<i>“The hand of Allah is over their hands”</i> (Q. 48:10) places every human hand under a higher one. That is the point of Numbers 27:18–23 : the hand of Moses was laid at the command of Yahweh .

XI. CORRECTIONS TO EARLIER LIBRARY MATERIAL

The Library's rule is that its own earlier work is tested by the same standard as everyone else's. Three points in **Doc 265** and **Doc 216** need refinement. The central finding of Doc 216 — that an elder is a known man of tested character, publicly commissioned by one who already serves, and never self-appointed — stands, and this study confirms it.

Correction 1 — the Levites and the laying on of hands. Doc 265 (Section V-F, and Correction 1 of its Section XIII) says the laying on of hands appears in the Torah for one commissioning only, Joshua's. The Torah records a second: the children of Israel laid their hands on the Levites when the Levites were given to the service (**Numbers 8:10**). The accurate statement is that Joshua's is the only laying on of hands by a leader upon his successor, and that the Torah also records the hands of the congregation on the Levites. Both sentences have been corrected in the Google Doc of Doc 265, which now says that a leader lays his hands on a successor only once in the Torah.

Correction 2 — the New Testament references in Doc 216. The opening table of Doc 216 says elders are commissioned by the laying on of hands of the presbytery, citing 1 Timothy 4:14 and Acts 6:6 and 13:3. In 1 Timothy 4:14 the body of elders lays hands on Timothy. Acts 6:6 concerns the seven, and Acts 13:3 concerns Barnabas and Saul. None of the three describes the commissioning of elders; the passages that touch elders are Acts 14:23 and 1 Timothy 5:22. The opening table in the Google Doc of Doc 216 has been corrected to say what each passage records.

Correction 3 — “the verb of elder-commissioning.” Doc 216 (Sections I-B and III-B, and Declaration III) calls *samakb* (to lay / lean upon) the verb of elder-commissioning and the laying on of hands *“the appointed mechanism for setting an elder into office.”* The Torah uses this verb for Joshua and for the Levites, and never for an elder. Elders were put forward by the tribes and appointed by Moses without any recorded rite (**Deuteronomy 1:13–15**), and the seventy received the spirit from

Yahweh with no hand laid (**Numbers 11:25**). Doc 216 (Section III-B) also lists three elements of Joshua's commissioning and omits the fourth, the limit of **Numbers 27:21**; and its Section III-C should be read together with **Numbers 27:18**, which places the spirit in Joshua before the hand. Suggested wording for Declaration III: ***"The pattern this Institution follows in setting an elder apart is taken from the commissioning of Joshua: the laying on of hands by one already serving, before the whole congregation, as a sign of recognition and charge."*** Because this concerns the Institution's own practice, it is set out here for Elder Kepha's decision and has not been changed in the Google Doc.

XII. SEVEN COVENANT DECLARATIONS ON THE LAYING ON OF HANDS

Per the **Deuteronomy 19:15** standard, no doctrine may stand on a single text. Each declaration below draws on more than one witness.

#	COVENANT DECLARATION	BASIS
I	The flock is Yahweh's , and the shepherd is His to appoint. Moses asked and did not choose; Yahweh named the man.	Numbers 27:15–18; Deuteronomy 31:3, 14; Jeremiah 3:15
II	The spirit and a proven life came before the hand. The hand marked the man; it did not make him.	Numbers 27:18; 32:12; Exodus 33:11; Deuteronomy 1:13
III	The hand was laid in the open, before the priest and the whole congregation. The Tanakh knows no private commissioning to lead the people of Yahweh .	Numbers 27:19, 22; Deuteronomy 31:7; Numbers 20:27
IV	The commissioning carried a charge, and the charge bound the leader to the written Torah, to keep it without turning to the right or to the left.	Numbers 27:19, 23; Deuteronomy 31:7–8; Joshua 1:7–8
V	Only some of Moses' majesty passed to Joshua, and Joshua remained under an authority outside himself: he stood beside the priest and was to ask before he acted.	Numbers 27:20–21; Deuteronomy 34:10; Joshua 9:14
VI	The Tanakh records no chain of hands from Moses and no hand that gives the spirit at will. Yahweh raises up, and Yahweh gives.	Judges 2:10, 16; Numbers 11:25; 2 Kings 2:10; Ezekiel 36:27

#	COVENANT DECLARATION	BASIS
VII	No one today holds the authority of Moses. What a covenant community may do is recognize known and tested men in public, by the hands of those who already serve, under the written covenant, while it waits for what Yahweh has promised to restore.	Deuteronomy 34:10; 1:13–15; Numbers 8:10; Ezra 2:63; Isaiah 8:20

XIII. THE COVENANT RESPONSE — WHAT THE TANAKH SAYS TO THE ONE WHO ASKS

Behind these questions there is usually a person who has been told to submit to someone because hands were laid on him, or who is carrying a work and wonders how it is to be handed on.

Tanakh's answer is fivefold.

First: pray the prayer of Moses. Before anyone is chosen, ask the **Elohim** of the spirits of all flesh to appoint, *“that the congregation of Yahweh be not as sheep that have no shepherd”* (Numbers 27:16–17). He has promised, *“I will give you shepherds according to My heart”* (Jeremiah 3:15).

Second: look for the man in whom spirit already is. Joshua served for forty years, stood alone with Caleb against a whole congregation, and *“followed Yahweh fully”* before any hand was laid on him (Numbers 27:18; 32:12). Do not expect a ceremony to supply what a life has not shown.

Third: do it in the open, and give a charge. Stand the man before those who teach and before the people, and tell him plainly what he is to do (Numbers 27:19). The charge has not changed: *“Be strong and courageous,”* and do not let this book of the Torah depart from your mouth (Deuteronomy 31:7; Joshua 1:8).

Fourth: do not claim what the hand cannot give, and do not fear a man who claims it. No one today stands in the place of Moses. No one's hands give the spirit. No title places a man above the written word. *“To the Torah and to the testimony!”* (Isaiah 8:20).

Fifth: prepare a Joshua, and wait for what Yahweh has promised. Every father, mother, elder, and teacher has someone to train and to charge (Deuteronomy 6:7). And the Shepherd of Israel has not left His flock without a promise: *“I will raise up over them one shepherd, and he shall feed them”* (Ezekiel 34:23).

The hand of Moses rested on Joshua for a moment. The hand of Yahweh upholds His people still (Psalms 37:24).

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“Let Yahweh, the Elohim of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the congregation, who shall go out before them and who shall come in before them, who shall lead them out and who shall bring them in, that the congregation of Yahweh be not as sheep that have no shepherd.”

Numbers 27:16–17 — The Written Covenant of Yahweh

MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT INSTITUTION

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