The slapping or imposition of the hand on the chest or back is a Prophetic gesture associated with driving away evil influence (wazwās) and conferring blessing as shown by the following reports:

(i) As Abū Sufyān ibn Ḥarb was sitting, after the conquest of Makka, watching the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ walking with the people close on his heels, he said to himself, “What if I gathered a huge army against Muhammad? What if I resumed fighting this man?” Whereupon the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ walked over to him and slapped him in the chest or between his shoulder-blades and said: “Then Allāh shall disgrace you!” He raised his head and there was the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ, standing next to him. Abū Sufyān said: “I repent to Allāh and seek forgiveness of Allāh! I was never certain, until this moment, that you were truly a Prophet. Indeed, I was saying this to myself just now.”

(ii) ‘Āmir ibn Rab’a and Sahl ibn Hunayf went out to bathe. ‘Āmir took off his woolen robe. He [Sahl] narrates: “I looked at him and I cast the evil eye on him. He went down into the water then I heard a noise coming from him. I called out to him three times but there was no answer. I went to [Sahl] and said: ‘O Allah! Grant him steadfastness and make him a guide of righteousness and whether in his person or property – let him invoke blessing for him, for the evil eye is a reality.’”

(iii) A report from Ṭalḥa states: A man recited [the Qur’an] before ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab ﷺ who corrected him, so the man said: “I recited before the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ and he did not correct me. They went for arbitration before the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ where the man said: ‘Messenger of Allāh, did you not made me recite such-and-such a verse?’ He said yes. Something stirred in ‘Umar’s breast. Realizing this from ‘Umar’s face, the Prophet ﷺ slapped his chest (darāba sadrah) and said: “Off, devil!” saying it three times. Then he said: “O ‘Umar! The Qur’an is, all of it, correct (sa‘wāb), as long as you do not change mercy into punishment or punishment into mercy.”

(iv) In similar circumstances, Ubay ibn Ka‘b said: “There occurred in my mind a sort of denial which did not occur even during the Days of Ignorance. When the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ saw how I was affected, he slapped me on the chest. I broke into a sweat and felt as if I were looking at Allāh in fear.”

(v) A woman brought to the Prophet ﷺ a black slave-girl, saying, “Messenger of Allāh, I am obligated to free a Muslim slave. Does this girl fulfill this obligation of mine?” The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ asked her: “Who is your Lord?” She said, “Allāh.” He asked, “And what is your religion?” She said, “Al-Islām.” He asked, “And who am I?” She replied, “You are the Messenger of Allāh.” He asked: “Do you pray the Five [Prayers] and do you accept what I have brought from Allāh?” She said yes. Whereupon the Prophet ﷺ slapped her on the chest and said: “Free her!”

(vi) Jarir ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Bajalji was sent by the Prophet ﷺ on a mission to destroy Dhū al-Khalaṣa, the idol-house of Khāth’am, nicknamed the Yemenite Ka’ba. Jarir narrates: “I went along with an hundred and fifty horsemen but I could not sit steadily on horse. I mentioned it to the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ who then struck his hand on my chest so hard that I could see the trace of his fingers on it, saying: ‘Allāh! Grant him steadfastness and make him a guide of righteousness and a rightly-guided one!’”

(vii) One time the Prophet ﷺ went to al-Baq‘ at night and ‘Ā’isha followed him surreptitiously. After his visit, he turned to walk back home. ‘Ā’isha narrates:

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1Narrated from Abū Ishāq al-Subay’ī and Ibn ‘Abbās by Ibn ‘Asākir (23:457-458), Ibn Sa’d, al-Bayhaqī, and others cf. Isāba (3:414), Bihāya (4:304), Khasā‘īs (1:441), and Dahlan’s Sīra (2:84).


3Al-Ṭabarī, Tafsīr, beginning, chapter on the dialects in which the Qur’an was revealed.

4Narrated by Muslim.


6Narrated by al-Bukhārī and Muslim.
He hastened his steps and I hastened mine. He ran and I ran. He arrived as I arrived except that I entered first. As I lay down in the bed, he entered and said: “Why is it, ‘Ā’ish [sic], that you are out of breath?” I said: “No reason!” He said: “Tell me, or the Subtle and Aware will inform me!” I said: “Messenger of Allāh, may my father and mother be your ransom!” Then I told him. He said: “So it was your form I saw in front of me?” Then I said yes. He gave me a push or slap on the chest which made me sore then said: “Did you think that Allāh and His Apostle would deal unjustly with you?”

(viii) Ja‘far ibn Muhammad reported on the authority of his father: “We went to see Jābir ibn ‘Abd Allāh who began attending to his visitors until it was my turn. I said: ‘I am Muhammad ibn ‘Alī ibn al-Husayn.’ He placed his hand upon my head and opened my upper button and then the lower one and placed his palm on my chest. I was, in those days, a young boy. He said: ‘You are welcome, my nephew.”

(ix) Shayba ibn ‘Uthmān ibn Ṭalḥa narrated: “The year of the Conquest the Messenger of Allāh entered Makka by force. I said to myself, let me join up with the Quraysh and the Hawāzin in Ḥunayn. Perhaps, in the fray of battle, I shall be able to fall upon Muh.ammad unguarded and I shall be the one who obtains Quraysh’s revenge. I also used to say, even if no one [non-Muslim] is left among the Arabs and ‘Ajam, I shall still not follow Muh.ammad! I shall never follow him! I was, therefore, very determined against him when I rode out and my determination only increased in intensity. When the people entered the fray, the fighting caused the Messenger of Allāh to dismount his mule. I unsheathed my sword and approached to carry out my intent against him. I raised my sword and was almost standing over him when he put up, in front of me, a blaze like a lightning bolt that almost charred me! I put up my hand before my eyes, fearing to lose my sight, then I turned towards the Messenger of Allāh. At that time he called me: ‘Shayba, come here!’ I went near him and he wiped my breast then said: ‘O Allāh, protect him from the devil.’ I swear it by Allāh! – at that very moment, he became more beloved to me than my hearing, my sight, and my own life! Allāh took away everything that was in me. … Then he said: ‘Shayba, what Allāh desired for you is better than what you desired for yourself.’ Then he revealed to me all that I had harbored in my heart – things I had never mentioned to anyone whatsoever. I said, ‘I bear witness that there is no God but Allāh and that you are the Messenger of Allāh.’ Then I said, ‘Ask forgiveness for me, O Messenger of Allāh!’ He replied, ‘Allāh forgive you.’”

(x) The Prophet said to Wābis.: “Consult yourself, consult your heart (istafti nafsak istafti qalbak), Wābis!” three times while poking Wābis’s chest with his [first] three fingers, adding: “Virtue is what sets the soul and heart at rest (mā-ta’annat ilayhi al-nafsu wamā-ta’anna ilayhi al-qalb) while vice is what pricks the conscience [lit. “becomes fixed in yourself”] and nags [lit. “goes back and forth in”] the breast (mā ḥākā fil-nafsi wa taraddada fil-sadr), no matter what people keep recommending to you.”

(xi) A report states that as Yūsuf approached the King’s wife, his father Ya’qūb appeared and slapped him in the chest, whereupon Yūsuf’s lust exited through his fingertips.

Blessings of Allāh and His Greeting of Peace upon you, Messenger of Allāh, and upon your Family and Companions and their faithful followers to the Resurrection-Day.