The topic of the present note is an unrecognized Hebrew idiom which has two variant forms, each occurring only once. The first passage, Gen. xlix 6, has received most attention since it is apparently the more difficult and because it also exhibits several interesting poetic features (which are pointed out below). The other text (Ps. lxxxvi 11), though less notorious, is not without its own problems, and so must also be examined in some detail.

Gen. xlix 6 reads as follows, if we adopt the correction of MT kebôdî, “my glory (m.)” to kebëdî, “my liver (f.)” 1).

bêšôdâm 'al-têbî napṣî
bigâlâm 'al-ôhad kebêdî
Let my soul not enter their council; let my liver not ... in their assembly.

Vetus Testamentum XXXI, 1 (1981)
The main problem here is posed by the verb in the second colon. Is it to be derived from יָהָד, “to be united”, or because this “lacks a genuine poetic ring”, as Dahood argues, is the underlying verb a dialectal form of בָּדָּב, “to see”, cognate with Ugaritic ḫy? There is a third possibility, already envisaged in such reference works as BDB, namely, the verb בָּדָּב, “to rejoice” (p. 292). In fact, attractive as Dahood’s suggestion might be, it is this third option which must be correct in view of the cognate Akkadian verb ḫadû, “to be happy, rejoice” which is often constructed with either kabattu or libbu, “heart”. Examples are kabattaka libdu, “may you (lit. your mind) be happy” and libbaka n libbi ḫadû, “you and I will be pleased”. In other words, though both in Hebrew and in Akkadian the verb (בָּדָּב and ḫadû respectively) can be used on its own 6), it very frequently occurs in Akkadian together with either kabattu or libbu as an idiom meaning “to be happy”. Most probably, then, a corresponding form of the idiom could occur in Hebrew, and Gen xlix 6 seems to be a case in point. The couplet can therefore be translated:

I myself shall not enter their group;
I shall not be happy in their company,

assuming appropriate revocalization of the second verb 9). A variant of the same idiom, with the substitution of šeb for ḫabû, is used in Ps. lxxxvi 11:

הָורֵנִי יָהָב דָּרֵכֶקָה
נָהֲלֵקְ בַּאֲמִיטֶקָה
יִיחָד יִשָּׁבָּה יֵיְרַד שֶׁמֶקָה
Yahweh, teach me your way;
so I may walk in your truth,
(and) rejoice to revere your name.

Literally, the last line would be translated “May my heart be happy to revere your name”, but the poet is using epistolary language and so refers to himself indirectly 11).

The choice of one alloform of this particular idiom in Ps. lxxxvi is clear enough on stylistic grounds (since the psalm is couched in terms suited to a letter); but what prompted its use in Gen. xlix? The answer, it would seem, is that the poet wanted to create a perfectly balanced couplet. Each line has the syntactic pattern: preposition + noun + 3rd m. plur. suffix—negative particle + (f. sing.) verb—