The words quoted in the title of this article comprise the b-colon of a verse that appears twice in Psalm cxvi. The full verse (vv. 14, 18) is as follows: בַּעֲרָתִי לָדוֹדָה אֶל יְהוָה נַעֲרָתִי. The a-colon presents no difficulty whatsoever. In line with the standard English translations, we render these words as “my vows to the Lord I will pay”.

The problem arises with the second half of the verse. Without exception among the translations (in various languages) that we have consulted, the form יִנְגִיַּד נַנָּה is rendered as if it were the preposition יִנְגִיַּד “in front of, in sight of, before, opposite, etc.”, with suffixed adverbial הֶ. A representative English translation is “in the presence of all his people” (thus KJV, NKJV, RSV, NIV, NASB, NJV). The difficulties with this rendering are obvious: a) this would be the only case in all of Biblical Hebrew in which adverbial הֶ (often called הֶ-locale) is added to a preposition, as opposed to a noun; and b) this would be the only case in all of Biblical Hebrew in which the particle נַנָּה follows a preposition, as opposed to a verb or other selected particles. The use of “in the

1 Most translations, e.g., NKJV, RSV, NJV, render “I will pay my vows to the Lord” (or something very similar). We prefer to follow the Hebrew word order whenever possible, and thus we have placed the object “my vows to the Lord” before the verb (with pronoun indicator) “I will pay”.

2 See in general M. L. Barré, “Psalm 116: Its Structure and Its Enigmas”, JBL 109 (1990), pp. 61-79, especially pp. 73-74. Unlike Barré, however, who proposed a textual emendation to solve this crux, we prefer to work with MT as transmitted by the ancient traditions. True, Barré’s proposal necessitates “only” an emendation of the vowels—thus he reads יֶנְגִיַּד-נַנָּה “we will proclaim”—but such an alteration of the text remains an emendation nonetheless (contra the opinion of many scholars). For a parallel situation, see G. A. Rendsburg, “Psalm cx 3b”, VT 49 (1999), pp. 548-53. More radical surgeries such as that proposed by BHS, ad loc., hardly require comment.

presence of” in the standard English translations may be an attempt to solve the first problem—that is, יְהִי seen as a noun meaning “presence” instead of a pure preposition meaning “before” (and similarly with German renderings such as “in Gegenwart des” or “in Gegenwart von”; thus the two reference grammars cited in n. 3), and thus it may bear the he locale—but the problem of יְהִי remains nonetheless. For just as this particle cannot follow a preposition, it equally cannot follow a noun. Strikingly, not a single standard grammar book takes note of this issue.

The particle יְהִי, as is well known, occurs in three environments generally: (a) with imperative verbs (240X), where the meaning “please” is suggested (though often English “now” is used idiomatically); (b) with prefix-conjugation (PC) verbs (105X), with volitional force mainly (thus most commonly with the long PC [cohortative] forms); and (c) with other particles, viz., יְהִי (25X), יְהִי (19X), יְהִי (9X), יְהִי (3X), and יְהִי (1X).

In light of the above, we propose that יְהִי be understood not as an unusual form of the preposition meaning “before”, nor as a unique noun with adverbial he meaning “presence”, but rather as the Qal long imperative form of the verb יְהִי. The following particle יְהִי thus is explained according to the standard rules of Hebrew grammar.

The verbal root יְהִי is known in Hebrew, of course, though apart from this one instance it is limited to the Hiph’îl, with the meaning “tell”, and the Hoph’al, with the meaning “be told”. But in various Aramaic dialects the root יְהִי appears commonly in the Qal, or Pe’al, with the meaning “guide, lead”. We propose that this sense be attributed to Ps cxvi 14, 18.

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4 As may be determined from consulting F. C. Putnam, A Cumulative Index to the Grammar and Syntax of Biblical Hebrew (Winona Lake, Ind., 1996), p. 271. The references cited at Ps cxvi 14, 18 all direct the reader to discussions of the form יְהִי, as cited above, n. 3. M. Dahood, Psalms III (Garden City, N.Y., 1970), p. 149, noted the problem, but his solution is unconvincing.

5 The most detailed treatment of יְהִי is S. Fassberg, Sugyat be-Tahbir ha-Miqra’ (Jerusalem, 1994), pp. 36-73. For less detailed treatments, see H. Gottlieb, “The Hebrew Particle מַי”, Acta Orientalia 33 (1971), pp. 47-54; and B. K. Waltke and M. O’Connor, An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax (Winona Lake, Ind., 1990), pp. 578-79. Not surprisingly, these scholars, along with others who have treated the issue, do not agree on all points regarding the force of יְהִי, but a discussion of their different opinions would carry us far beyond the specific case of Ps cxvi 14b, 18b.


8 A less detailed version of this proposal, though with greater attention to the workings
This usage of the verbal root יננ may be seen most commonly in Samaritan Aramaic (SA), with ample attestations in Jewish Palestinian Aramaic (JPA) as well. In the Samaritan Targum, for example, יננ is used regularly to render the Hebrew verb יננ “lead”, thus at Exod xiii 17, xv 13, xxxii 34, Num xxiii 7, etc., a point which is noted explicitly in the great Samaritan bilingual dictionary Ha-Meli. In addition, we may note the following wide variety of nouns derived from the root. Samaritan Aramaic attests to ינה, ינה, and ינה, all meaning “leader” (note, significantly, the Samaritan Targum’s use of ינה to render Hebrew ינות in Gen xlix 10), ינה “staff”, and ינה “guidance”; Targum Neofiti and Fragment Targum at Exod xiv 3 use the expression ינה ינה “paths of the desert”; Y. Qiddushin 60b (15) uses the noun ינה “leader” to describe one who leads the flock; Targum Yonatan regularly uses the noun ינה to render Hebrew ינה (e.g., 6x in Judg ii 16-19); and Targum to Ruth at Ruth i 1 renders the Hebrew expression ינה ינה ינה ינה “the judging of the judges” with ינה ינה ינה ינה “the leading of the leaders”. Syriac uses the verb יננ commonly in some closely related meanings to “lead”, such as “draw, attract, induce, persuade, etc.”; in the sense of “guide, lead”, יננ appears to be limited to the specific usage of leading or guiding the blind. Mandaic also uses the verb יננ in a wide array of meanings, such as “draw, stretch out, unfurl, cause to flow, etc.”, but there are ample attestations of “lead forth, guide, govern” as well.

We are unable to present examples of the verb יננ “lead” in Aramaic sources of the Iron Age (only the connotation “pull, tow” is attested), but the texts do include one sure instance of the noun יננ with the

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14 Ibid.
15 As noted by M. Jastrow, Dictionary of the Talmud Babli, Yerushalmi, Midrashic Literature and Targumim (London, 1903), vol. 2, p. 873; and A. Kohut, Sefer Arukh ha-Shalem = Aruch Completum (Berlin, 1926), vol. 5, p. 305.
meaning “leader”, along with one uncertain case.\textsuperscript{20} The sure instance is \textit{KAI} 224:10 = Sefire III 10, where מֶלֶךְ מָרָיו clearly means “one of my officers”.\textsuperscript{21} The uncertain case is \textit{KAI} 266:8 = Adon Letter, line 8, where one simply cannot determine whether מָלֵךְ or מָלֵךְ is to be read.\textsuperscript{22}

It is obvious that Hebrew also knows a common noun from this root with the meaning “leader”, namely מֶלֶךְ and therefore one may say that much of the Aramaic evidence presented above is irrelevant. We have taken the opportunity to present the totality of the Aramaic data, however, in order to stress: a) most importantly, that the Aramaic lexicon includes a verb מָלֵךְ with the sense “guide, lead”, in contrast to Hebrew which lacks such a verb; and b) also significantly, that the root is productive in Aramaic, creating a series of nouns with a wide array of connotations, in contrast to Hebrew which knows only of the one noun מֶלֶךְ “leader”.

If we apply the definition “lead” to the expression מֶלֶךְ אֶל לְכָל עַם in Ps cxvi 14, 18, a sensible meaning emerges for the entire phrase. In fact, there are two options, depending on how one understands the preposition ג. The first option is to render ג as simply “for” or “for the benefit of”, yielding a sense for the phrase such as “please, be a nāgīd for all his people” or “lead now, for the benefit of all his people”.

The second option understands ג as the indicator of the direct object, a feature well attested in Aramaic\textsuperscript{24} and known from selected passages in the Hebrew Bible also.\textsuperscript{25} Indeed, as the following examples demonstrate, מָלֵךְ “guide, lead” in Aramaic governs the preposition ג serving to indicate the direct object:

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., pp. 713-14.
\textsuperscript{22} H. Donner and W. Röllig, \textit{Kanaanäische und Aramäische Inschriften} (Wiesbaden, 1964), vol. 1, p. 51, vol. 2, p. 314 (“unsicherer Lesung”). See also the remarks of Fitzmyer, \textit{The Aramaic Inscriptions of Sefire}, p. 113. B. Porten and A. Yardeni, \textit{Textbook of Aramaic Documents from Ancient Egypt}, vol. 1: \textit{Letters} (Jerusalem, 1986), p. 6, have used the latest technology available for reading papyri and other ancient texts, yet they too are unable to decide between dalet and resh in this particular word.
Jewish Palestinian Aramaic: Eikha Rabba 44:8:

“a caravan-chief who was guiding three hundred camels”26

Samaritan Aramaic: Tibat Marqe 55a

“they went and the cloud and the glory led them.”27

If we follow this approach, a serviceable translation would be “lead now his entire people”. In support of this analysis, note that Psalm cxvi includes another instance of \( \text{ל} \) as the direct object marker, namely, in v. 16 מַעֲמַרְמָלִים “you released my bonds”.28

At first glance one might rejoin that either of these understandings of the b-colon creates its own difficulties: most notably, one is led to ask, who is speaking? and who is being addressed? Our solution is to suggest that the poet himself—who has been speaking throughout Psalm cxvi with its numerous first person singular references—is speaking here as well, and that he addresses himself, rallying himself to lead God’s (sc. “his”) people. As an analogy of long imperative followed by \( \text{ל} \) with the speaker addressing himself, we present Qoh ii 1 מַעֲמַרְמָלִים “I said in my heart, ‘Come now, let me make you experience happiness, and enjoy good!’”29 The psalmist already has addressed himself in v. 7—though there more traditional language is used, with \( \text{ל} \), literally “my soul”, as the addressee—and he returns to such discourse here in vv. 14b, 18b. In short, as is abundantly clear throughout the book of Qohelet and in particular in Qoh ii 1, here too in Ps cxvi 14b, 18b: the verse becomes a soliloquy in which the “I” exhorts himself to take command and lead the people in the religious cult.

The repetition of the expression is to be explained as follows. In the first usage, in v. 14b, it is not clear to the reader whither the poet will lead the people. The reader gains a sense, of course, that the people will be guided in some cultic practice, as the poet proclaims that he will raise a cup (v. 13a), call to Yahweh (v. 13b), and pay his vows (v. 14a). But the rhetorical effect of the rehearsal of these words becomes clear in the climactic culmination of the psalm. Here the poet declares

29 For discussion of Qohelet’s addressing himself here, see T. A. Perry, Dialogues with Kohelet (University Park, Pa., 1993), p. 73; and C.-L. Seow, Ecclesiastes (New York, 1997), p. 125.
that he will sacrifice a thanksgiving offering (v. 17a), again that he will call to Yahweh (v. 17b), and once more that he will pay his vows (v. 18a). Only this time he extends the phrase “lead now his entire people” (v. 18b) with the climactic objective “into the courts of the house of Yahweh, in the midst of Jerusalem, Halleluyah!” (v. 19). We have here, in a sense, an example of what C. H. Gordon labeled “build-up and climax,” with the expression presented first in v. 14, but with its full effect discernible only upon its second use in v. 18.

A second question which naturally arises from our analysis is the issue of the segol vowel in the first syllable of יְשַׁלָּח. Typically the Qal long imperative has in the first syllable either qames qatan (if the regular imperative is of the הָיָה type) or hireq (if the regular imperative is of the הָיָה type). But this would not be the only instance in the Bible of the Qal long imperative with segol in the first syllable. The standard reference grammars quote two other examples: יְשַׁלָּח in Num xi 16 and יְשַׁלָּח in Job xxxiii 5. The reason for the segol in the first example is most likely the laryngeal ‘aleph (compare the 1st person common singular pronoun indicator of the Qal PC, viz., יְשֹׁלַח). The second example presents a combination of consonants, the pharyngeal ‘ayin and the uvular resh, which would explain the presence of the segol in יְשַׁלָּח. In light of these two recognized examples, the presence of the segol in יְשַׁלָּח also should be explained along phonetic lines, with the causal factor being not so much the nasal nun, but rather the velar gimmel. In short, there is no reason to question the segol in this form, to be analyzed as Qal long imperative.

In the above interpretation of Ps cxvi 14b, 18b, we have applied an Aramaic sense to the root יְשַׁלָּח, and we have suggested the possibility that the preposition יָשָׁר serves as the marker of the direct object in accordance with common Aramaic usage. One should not be surprised to see such Aramaic-like features in this poem, because Psalm cxvi is, as Rendsburg has shown previously, an Israelian composition. In fact, this chapter has one of the highest concentrations of Israelian Hebrew (IH) features—including mainly items with links to Aramaic,

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31 GKC, p. 132, §48i; Bauer and Leander, Historische Grammatik der hebräischen Sprache, p. 347, §49g; and Joüon and Muraoka, A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew, vol. 1, p. 143, §49d.
but also one item which can be shown to be an IH trait without recourse to Aramaic—in the entire Bible. A listing of these IH features follows:

(a) the form הֵעֲשִׁית, "he will save" in v. 6, with non-elision of the he in the Hiph‘il PC, as also in the Aramaic Haph‘el/Aph‘el conjugation.33

(b) the 2nd person feminine singular pronominal suffix יָא, occurring twice in v. 7 and once in v. 19, as also in Aramaic.34

(c) the wording רְעַת בָּרָא "from tears" in v. 8, with min before an anarthrous noun, as also in Aramaic and in Deir ‘Alla.35

(d) the “double plural” construct chain גְּדוֹלָתָהּ, literally “lands of the living” > “land of the living” in v. 9, as attested also in Phoenician and in Byblos Amarna.36

(e) the meaning “carry off, pursue” inherent in the word אֵלַי in v. 10, as also with the Aramaic root נָשָׁה.37

(f) the 3rd person masculine singular pronominal suffix יַנְצָ ת occurring in v. 12, as also in Aramaic and in Deir ‘Alla.38

(g) the meaning “grievous” present in the word יַפְר in v. 15, as also in Aramaic.39

(h) the aforecited use of יִלָּ as the indicator of the direct object in v. 16 מָדְתָךְ כָּהֵם “you released my bonds”.

When we add to this list the use of the verb יָשָׁי “guide, lead” (we leave aside the option that יִלָּ serves to mark the direct object in vv. 14b, 18b), we note that there are 9 separate IH features (all but one of them [item (d) above] known from Aramaic) attested a total of 13 times, all within a poem of 19 verses. The result is a poem with a concentration of IH features of 68.4%, far surpassing, by way of comparison, the chapter in Kings with the highest concentration of IH

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33 Ibid., pp. 48-49.
34 Ibid., p. 84.
35 This usage was not treated in Rendsburg, Psalms. See now G. A. Rendsburg, Israeli Hebrew in the Book of Kings (Bethesda, Md., 2002), p. 132.
38 Rendsburg, Psalms, p. 85.
features, namely, 2 Kings iv, with 22 items in 44 verses, or 50%. Clearly, we are dealing with a poem composed in northern Israel, in a dialect of Hebrew sharing numerous isoglosses with Aramaic. It is not surprising, therefore, that our poet’s lexis included the Qal verb מָנָה “guide, lead”.

Finally, there is one other point to be raised regarding the twofold use of מָנָה “guide, lead” in Psalm cxvi. One might assume that even within IH, or within the subdialect thereof in which this poem was written, the Qal form of מָנָה was not very common. After all, we still must reckon with מָנָה in Ps cxvi 14, 18, as a unique usage in the Bible. Accordingly, one may ask, what led the poet to choose specifically this word, and not a more common root such as מָנָה or מָנָה to express the sense “guide, lead”? The answer lies in the alliteration produced by invoking the root מָנָה in the b-colon, for it approximates quite closely the sounds of the noun מָנָה “vow” in the a-colon. Note that both words include the consonants nun and dalet, and that the gimel of the former and the resh of the latter may share the approximate point of articulation in the mouth. The exact articulation of /r/ in ancient Hebrew is a debated issue. If the Tiberian pronunciation of /r/ as a rolled uvular is representative of Iron Age Hebrew, then it would have sounded very much like the velar plosive /g/. But even if /r/ was pronounced as a rolled dental in Iron Age Hebrew, as seems more likely, in which case it would have had less in common with /g/, the two lexemes מָנָה and מָנָה nevertheless would have alliterated in the ears of an ancient Israelite. Various recent studies have shown how rare lexemes were employed by the ancient Hebrew writers to produce alliteration. The case of מָנָה in Ps cxvi 14, 18, would be one

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40 Rendsburg, Kings, p. 146. Unfortunately, Rendsburg, Psalms, does not include a statistical survey, so a specific comparison with other Psalms is not attempted here.

41 Emerton, “How Does the Lord Regard the Death of His Saints in Psalm cxvi 15?” p. 154, reached a similar conclusion concerning the presence of מָנָה “grievous”.


43 For the evidence of Tiberian Hebrew, see G. Khan, “Tiberian Hebrew Phonology”, in A. S. Kaye, ed., The Phonologies of Asia and Africa, p. 89.


further example of this fundamental feature of ancient Hebrew literary style.

In sum, understanding אָזְבַּף as the Qal long imperative of the root יָנָב “guide, lead”, (a) explains the presence of the following particle סָנוֹת; (b) permits the reader to observe the poet addressing himself once more, as he does earlier in v. 7; (c) allows for the poetic technique of build-up and climax; (d) is unobjectionable on phonetic grounds, lest someone question the segol in the first syllable; (e) is explicable in light of the many other Aramaic-like features in Psalm cxvi; and (f) attests to the poet’s capacity of reaching deep into the Hebrew lexicon, or to be more specific, the IH lexicon, to find a rare vocable to produce a splendid example of alliteration.

Abstract

The phrase אָזְבַּף לָתֵּר יָנָב in Ps cxvi 14b, 18b has puzzled scholars, mainly because of the problem of the particle סָנוֹת following what appears to be a byform of the preposition יָנָב. In this article, we explain אָזְבַּף as the Qal long imperative of the root יָנָב “guide, lead”, a verb well-known from Aramaic. The presence of סָנוֹת, accordingly, does not violate the rules of Hebrew grammar. The stich is to be translated, depending on how one understands the morpheme סָנוֹת, either as “lead now, for the benefit of all his people” (with סָנוֹת serving as a preposition meaning “for, for the benefit of”), or as “lead now his entire people” (with סָנוֹת serving as the nota accusativi, as also known from Aramaic and elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible). We understand the phrase as the poet addressing himself once more, as he does earlier in v. 7. A variety of linguistic and literary issues are presented in support of our proposal.