

PROVERBIAL PAIRS: COMPOSITIONAL UNITS IN PROVERBS 10-29

TED HILDEBRANDT
Grace College, Winona Lake, IN 46590

I. Willy-Nilly Advocates

One of the most common comments concerning the corpus of Proverbs 10-29 has been that these proverbs are perceived to be a chaotic confusion--thrown together willy-nilly without any conceptual or literary cohesion. The following remarks are representative of the majority who reject any architectonic structure. W. O. E. Oesterley writes, "But generally speaking, the proverbs are thrown together in a very haphazard fashion in this collection."¹ R. Gordon explains that Proverbs is difficult to read because "there is little continuity or progression."² G. von Rad also expresses his annoyance at the "lack of order."³ W. McKane maintains that the sentences are independent and atomistic; he labels all vincula between the proverbs as

¹Oesterley, *The Book of Proverbs* (London: Methuen, 1929) 125, 73, 77. Other writers who have expressed similar sentiments are W. C. Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981) 93; K. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Proverbs* (repr. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973) 208; R. N. Whybray, *The Intellectual Tradition* (New York: de Gruyter, 1974) 67; W. S. LaSor, D. A. Hubbard, and F. W. Bush, *Old Testament Survey* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982) 552; R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969) 1017; B. H. Kelly, "The Book of Proverbs," *Int* 2 (1948) 347; and J. L. McKenzie, "The Wisdom of the Hebrews, in *The Two-Edged Sword* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1959) 217. J. M. Thompson, to the contrary, makes the following unfortunate statement: "As for our canonical proverbs in particular, they fail to reach us, it would seem, for still a third reason: they are jumbled together willy-nilly into collections. (*The Form and Function of Proverbs* [The Hague: Mouton, 1974] 15).

²Gordon, "Motivation in Proverbs," *Biblical Theology* 25 (1975) 49. J. Paterson (*The Wisdom of Israel* [London: Lutterworth, 1961] 63) and P. C. Craigie ("Biblical Wisdom in the Modern World: I. Proverbs," *Crux* 15 [1979] 7) make similar comments in terms of the alienation of Proverbs from modern readers because of its lack of topical/logical order. On the contrary, this writer will maintain that the ordering of Proverbs, when properly understood, will be very palatable to modern readers (see Barbara and Wolfgang Mieder, "Tradition and Innovation: Proverbs in Advertising," in *The Wisdom of Many: Essay on the Proverb* [New York: Garland, 1981] 309-22). Furthermore, modern persons' expanding tolerance for farrago (e.g., television commercials) should allow them to appreciate these proverbs more than their predecessors did. The rebirth of wisdom studies reflects the modern concern for the ordering of the universe.

³Von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1972) 113.

"secondary" and nugatory for interpretation. This is further seen in his method of analysis, which totally disregards the collectional features of the canonical text.⁴ More recently, Bernard Lang opens his work on wisdom as teacher, goddess, and lady with this statement: "The biblical book of Proverbs is an almost random collection of brief didactic discourses, poems, learned and pious sayings."⁵

Some interpreters have acknowledged that there are small proverbial clusters, having detected some common theme, catchword, or letter; but they quickly go on to minimize the importance of such a canonical collectional phenomenon. J. C. Rylaarsdam comments, "Even when two or more successive proverbs deal more or less with the same subject (for example, 10:4-5), the connection seems incidental rather than organic. There is no logical continuity of thought."⁶ Thus, many emphasize the atomistic character of the sentences. Each sentence is indeed a self-contained unit. One should not, however, ignore collectional features that may give an indication of editorial tendenz. This paper will attempt to identify the "proverbial pair" as a collectional, architectonic unit above the sentence level.

II. Definition

The proverbial pair may be defined as two proverbial sentences that are bonded together (whether by means of phonetics, semantics, syntax, rhetorical device, pragmatic situation or theme) into a higher architectonic unit. Hence, the "proverbial pair" is proposed to be a literary form which evinces the literary and editorial craftsmanship of the proverbial collectors (Prov 25:1).

III. Methodology

What methodology was used for isolating this unit? Initially the text was read and many possible pairings were isolated. The pairings were then

⁴McKane, *Proverbs* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970) 10, 413, 415.

⁵Lang, *Wisdom and the Book of Proverbs: An Israelite Goddess Redefined* (New York: Pilgrim, 1986) 3. See also Claudia Camp, *Wisdom and the Feminine in the Book of Proverbs* (Sheffield: Almond, 1985) 207.

⁶Rylaarsdam, *The Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, The Song of Solomon* (Layman's Bible Commentary; Richmond: John Knox, 1964) 48. G. Fohrer, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1965) 320; B. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979) 79, 555 (Childs says, "There is no significant ordering of the individual proverbs into larger groups" [p. 555]); Otto Eissfeldt, *The Old Testament: An Introduction* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965) 473. B. W. Kovacs ("Sociological-Structural Constraints" [Ph.D. diss., Vanderbilt University, 1978] 289-90) notes McKane's rejection of collectional ideas proposed by U. Skladny (*Die ältesten Spruchsammlungen in Israel* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1962] 7-10). J. L. Crenshaw comments that there is no principle of arrangement. Although he is well aware of proverbial connections, he does not view these as significant (*Old Testament Wisdom* [Atlanta: John Knox, 1981] 73). See also H. Ranston, *The Old Testament Wisdom Books and Their Teaching* (London: Epworth, 1930) 32.

analyzed in three directions. First, the pair was examined to discover what techniques were used to bind the two sentences. The levels used in establishing such cohesion may broadly be described as phonetic, syntactic, semantic, rhetorical, pragmatic, and thematic. Second, once it was shown that the two sentences were cohesive, then divergences or variational features were noticed. Third, the adjoining verses, before and after the pair, were scrutinized to see if the two bonded sayings were part of a larger cluster or if the pair stood by itself as a separate unit.

It is hoped that, when the regularity of bonding features and the tightness of the pairs are seen, it will be clear that such sentential pairing was not just random but was editorially intentional. The pairs reveal how the collectors worked with proverbial materials and reflect the theological tendenz and literary sensitivity of the collectors. Such artistic canonical shaping should not be ignored, for the regularity of linguistic form implies that meaning is just around the corner.

How frequent are the pairs in Proverbs 10-29? Sixty-two examples were discovered and analyzed, which account for 124 verses out of a total of 595 (21 % of the verses manifest this pairing feature).⁷ Many other bonded units were also observed in the initial analysis: (1) triads [23:26-28; 24:10-12; et al.]; (2) detached pairs [10:8/10; 16:32/17:1; 17:26/18:5; 19:1/18:23; et al.]; (3) pair plus one detached [15:1-2, 4; 15:8-9, 11; 20:16-17, 20; 20:29-30, 27; 10:25-26,23; et al.]; (4) pairs plus one [10:16-17, 18; 15:16-17, 15; 15:31-32, 30; 18:6-7, 8; 23:20-21, 19; et al.]; and (5) strings [11:9-12; 15:29-33; et al.]. Such cohesive features, because of their frequency, must not be ignored as semiotically insignificant.

IV. Model Pairs: Five Examples

Five examples will illustrate the isolation of pairs and will highlight the fascinating relationships and interactions within the pairs. Each pair will be examined for patterns of equivalence and difference within the fields of semantics, syntax, and theme.

A Semantically Cohesive Pair: Proverbs 26:4-5

Perhaps the most frequently cited proverbial pair is Proverbs 26:4-5.

:hTaxA-Mga Ol.-hv,w;Ti-NP, OTI;UaxiK; lysik; NfaT-lxa
VynAyfeB; MKAH: hy,h;yi-NP , OTI;UaxiK; lysik; hnefE

⁷The following is a list of all pairs isolated in this study: 10:2-3, 4-5, 15-16, 25-26, 31-32; 11:5-6, 16-17; 12:15-16, 18-19; 13:2-3, 7-8, 21-22; 14:20-21, 26-27; 15:1-2, 8-9, 13-14, 16-17, 20-21; 16:12-13, 18-19; 17:27-28; 18:10-11, 18-19, 20-21; 19:13-14,28-29; 20:16-17; 21:25-26, 30-31; 22:22-23, 24-25, 26-27; 23:13-14, 15-16, 17-18, 20-21, 24-25; 24:1-2, 3-4, 8-9, 13-14, 19-20,21-22,28-29; 25:2-3, 4-5, 6-7, 9-10, 11-12, 13-14, 16-17,21-22; 26:4-5, 18-19,20-21; 27:1-2, 3-4, 15-16, 25-26; 28:25-26; 29:2-3.

Do not answer a fool according to his folly,
 or you will be like him yourself.
 Answer a fool according to his folly,
 or he will be wise in his own eyes.

Although many refer to the contrary elements exhibited in this pair, few have observed that this type of pairing is common; hence, they miss seeing this as a molecular compositional unit.⁸ This particular example is also important because all acknowledge that the relationship between these contrary juxtaposed sentences results in a higher level of interpretation. It is beyond the scope of this article to develop in detail how the pairing phenomenon affects the interpretation of each of its sentential parts, although initial suggestions will be made.

Cohesion

Semantically, how is this pair bound together? This is an example of a multi-catchword cohesion. The repetitional combination of NfaTa + lysik; + OTI;Uaxik; cannot be accounted for by random probabilities, even given the high frequency of the wisdom vocabulary (lysik; and lyvix<). The verb hnAfA is not overly frequent in Proverbs. NP, occurs in the initial position both times, further featuring the connection. Even by the word repetitions alone one is left with a strong feeling of equivalence constituting these two sentences as a pair.

The equivalence is varied syntactically by the presence of the prohibitional negative lxa (26:4a), plus a jussive verb (NfaTa). Verse 5a drops the negative and substitutes a simple imperative of the same verb (hnAfA), thereby making the necessary grammatical transformations to create the resultant contrariness.⁹ Syntactically, in both cases, the second person is addressed in the first colon. Because of the predominance of elements of equivalence, the syntactic shift in the second colon of v 5 should not be overlooked. Colon 4b continues the second person address, exposing the consequences for the one who answers the fool as a result of violating the prohibition (26:4a).

⁸Crawford Toy does group it as a quatrain (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Proverbs* [ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1904] 473). McKane, *Proverbs*, 596; R. N. Whybray, *The Book of Proverbs* (Cambridge: University Press, 1972) 152; Dermot Cox, *Proverbs with an Introduction to Sapiential Books* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1982] 216; Derek Kidner, *The Proverbs: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1964) 162. R. B. Y. Scott does a nice job tying this pair into the contradictory proverbs phenomenon: "Marry in haste and repent at leisure"; "Happy the wooing that is not long in doing" (*Proverbs, Ecclesiastes* [AB 18; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1965] 159). Cf. "Haste makes waste" and "He who hesitates is lost."

⁹One should not overlook the brilliant work of Noam Chomsky on grammatical transforma-

tions (*Syntactic Structures* [The Hague: Mouton, 1957]; idem, *Studies on Semantics in Generative Grammar* [The Hague: Mouton, 1972]). See also Jeanne Herndon, *A Survey of Modern Grammars* [New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1970]).

Colon 5b, however, shifts syntactically to the third person, thus revealing the interpretational key to understanding the relationship between the two contrary sentences. Verse 5b focuses on the reactions of the fool himself by means of the third person pronominal suffix. Thus, v 5 states that if the fool is answered, his arrogance will be exposed and he may be moved away from it (third person focus). K. Hoglund's analysis is insightful in pointing out that being wise in one's own eyes is a "state worse than being a *ksyl*, since one should undertake efforts to prevent the fool from being caught in such self-evaluation."¹⁰ But v 4 cautions that you will face a personal risk and, very possibly, you will suffer damage by offering your rebuke to him (second person focus). The elements of semantic equivalence heighten the focus on syntactic difference demonstrating how the dynamic relationship between the paired sentences unlocks the interpretation of this pair's contrariness. The theme of the proverb closely flows from the semantic/syntactic commonalities. The common theme addressed is the decision whether or not one should answer a fool.

Separateness

Having examined the cohesive elements semantically, syntactically, and thematically (highlighting elements of equivalence and difference), the question that follows is: Is it a separate independent unit? We must look at whether it is bonded to its context and, if it is linked to a neighboring sentence whether that connection destroys the cohesive uniqueness and independence of the pair itself.¹¹

Proverbs 26:3 is also about the *MyliysiK*; (plural). However, the frequency of this word does not diminish the unique tightness of 26:4-5. The dominant use of metaphor (horse and bridle) is divergent from the nonmetaphorical expression of 26:4-5. The thematic focus on answering a fool is also missing.

Proverbs 26:6 again involves the *lysiK*;, although its positioning (last) does not link well with the common first colon position in 26:4-5. The double metaphor in 26:6a (cutting off one's feet and drinking violence) is quite dissimilar from the nonmetaphorical pair (26:4-5) but very similar to 26:7, which also links a leg metaphor and a fool. Using the fool as a messenger is quite different thematically from answering him. The fool is the common topic of discussion, loosely linking 26:3-12 into a larger cluster of which this pair (26:4-5) is one component. Thus, syntactically, semantically,

¹⁰Hoglund, "The Fool and the Wise in Dialogue," in *The Listening Heart: Essays in Wisdom and the Psalms in honor of Roland E. Murphy, O. Carm.* (ed. K. Hoglund et al.; JSOTSup 58; Sheffield: JSOT, 1987) 168.

¹¹See R. van Leeuwen, "The Problem of Literary Context in Proverbs 25-27: Structures, Poetics, and Semantics" (Ph.D. diss., University of St. Michael's College, Toronto, 1984) for a brilliant treatment of cohesive features in Proverbs 25-27.

and thematically Proverbs 26:4-5 stands as a pair loosely linked into a larger cluster.

A Syntactically Cohesive Pair: Proverbs 15:8-9

Proverbs 15:8-9 is a very tight pair with stimulating semantic and syntactic features.

:OnOcr; MyriwAy; tl.apit;U hvAhy; tbafeOT MyfiwAr; Hbaz,
:bhAx<y, hqAdAc; FDeram;U fwArA j`r,D, hvAhy; tbafeOT
The LORD detests the sacrifice of the wicked,
but the prayer of the upright pleases him.
The LORD detests the way of the wicked,
but he loves those who pursue righteousness.

Cohesion

Semantically, this pair has a multi-catchword cohesion. Not only are both sentences Yahweh sayings, but both also contain the noun phrase hvAhy; tbafeOT, which is rare in this collection of Proverbs. Notice the positional variation of the noun phrase. In v 8a it is second, whereas in v 9a it is in the initial position. The repetition of fwArA, in v 8a and v 9a results in three out of the four words in the first colon being shared. This is rare, even though fwArA, is a high-frequency word. Parallels are found also between the second cola. The winning of Yahweh's delight (v 8b: OnOcr;; + 3d masc. sg. suffix) is parallel to the statement in which Yahweh's love is expressed to the one pursuing righteousness (v 9b: bhAx<y,, 3d masc. sg. V). The common word

pairs, NOcrA (v 8b) / bhAxA (v 9b) and rwAyA (v 8b) / hqAdAc; (v 9b), add to the sense of cohesion between the two verses. Thus, although the bond between the second cola is not as repetitionally tight as between the first cola, the second cola do manifest parallelistic bonding. The cumulative effect of the semantic component is a clear pairing.

The syntactic relationships further enhance the cohesion of this pair. Both first cola are verbless clauses and have the shared noun phrase hvAhy; tbafeOT as the subject complement. In both first cola, the subject is a two-unit noun phrase that constructs an item with the character quality of the one possessing it (v 8a: Hbz, [item] + MyfiwAr; [character]/v 9a j`r,d, [item] + fwArA [character]). Whereas v 8a maintains isomorphic syntactical relationships with its mate (v 8a/v 9a; verbless clause with 2 two-unit noun phrases), v 8b is at variance with the syntax of v 9b. Looking deeper than the surface syntax, however, one finds in both v 8b and v 9b a pronominalizing of the subject--both having reference back to Yahweh in the first cola. The predication takes place through the subject complement in v 8b, which indicates God's pleasure over the prayers of the upright. In v 9b this same type of approval (God's love) is predicated by means of an active verb. Thus,

the two proverbs are parallel on a deep level while the surface grammar (noun versus verb) is different but transformationally related. Using M. O'Connor's syntactic constraint analysis, both verses have the same 0 2 4//0 2 3 colonic movement, which is common in the proverbial sentences.¹²

Thematically both sentences address what pleases/displeases Yahweh. This topic is rather rare in this collection. Verse 8 is varied by the addition of cultic terms (sacrifice and prayer). Verse 9 employs the wisdom terms *j`r,D,*

and *JDeram;*. Though the two proverbs may come from quite different original

settings, they are beautifully mated on semantic, syntactic, and thematic levels without losing the integrity and independence of the individual sentences. Thus, this pair focuses one's attention on the depths of Yahweh's evaluation, which looks beyond mere isolated cultic acts (sacrifice/prayer) to the larger direction (wicked/righteous) of one's life. Thus, there may be an apparent behavioral contradiction between a wicked one who offers a sacrifice and the consistently evil way in which the wicked one goes through life. In both cases, however, Yahweh's response is the same. Yahweh, the wise king, makes no mistakes; he is never fooled, so his evaluations of a person's actions (detests/loves) are to be feared and trusted.

Separateness

Now that it has been demonstrated that these two proverbs are clearly and strongly bonded together, do they stand alone as a pair or are they part of a larger string?

Prov 15:7 is loaded with high-frequency words characteristic of wisdom (*ytep;Wi/ ble, MymikAHE / MyliysiK;*), yet none of these words occurs in this pair

(15:8-9). Similarly, the verbal syntax is dissimilar from the verbless clauses in v 8a/b and v 9a. The theme (the spreading of knowledge by wise/fools) obviously does not connect directly with the theme of pleasing Yahweh. The pair 15:8-9 is not connected to 15:7.

This pair is also separate from 15:10. Although *j`r,D,* (v 9a) may be seen as a parallel to *Hraxo* (v 10a), these are high-frequency words and are used in quite different settings in the two verses. Similarly, hating (v 10b) and loving (v 9b) are a normal pair but the use is so divergent that it does not disrupt the unity of 15:8-9. Although vv 10b and 9b are syntactically similar, v 10a is quite different. Thematically, 15:10 addresses the issues of the reception of and the reaction to discipline in normal wisdom terms with no reference to Yahweh. It is thematically divergent, although according to 15:11 Yahweh is the one cognizant of persons' hearts and the stern consequences awaiting those who leave the path. Thus, there may be a cause/effect relationship between the 15:8-9 pair and 15:10-11. Prov 15:10 does not disturb the uniqueness and ability of the 15:8-9 pair to stand as a unit of composition.

¹²O'Connor, *Hebrew Verse Structure* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1980) 138.

A Non-catchword Pair: Proverbs 10:15-16

When noting the structural connections between the sentences, many have used solely the catchword phenomenon to indicate the rather loose and meaningless way in which the proverbial patches are stitched together.¹³ Prov 10:15-16 is a good example of a non-catchword proverbial pair.

:MwAyre Myl.iD tTaHim; Oz.fu tyar;qi rywifA NOh
:txF.AHl; fwArA txAUbT; Myy.iHl; qyDica tl.afuP;
The wealth of the rich is their fortified city,
but poverty is the ruin of the poor.
The wages of the righteous bring them life,
but the income of the wicked brings them punishment.

Cohesion

Semantically, there is not a single word that is repeated in the sentences of this pair. This difference is heightened by the presence of high-frequency words (qyDica; fwArA). Moreover, the abundance of economic terms could have led to a natural repetition (NOh, rywifA, Myl.iDa, wyre, hl.AfuP;, haAUbT;). The vocabulary seems to move from the realm of general economic status (10:15) to more specific terms for wages/income (10:16), which then are modified by moral terms (qyDica/ fwArA). Although there are no catchword repetitions, there are strong economic word parallels.

Syntactically, both v 15a/b and v 16a/b are verbless clauses. In all four cases the subjects are noun phrases composed of an item (wealth-related) plus the one possessing it (NP = N:It + N[Adj]:Pos). In v 15 the possessors are characterized by their economic status (rywifA / Myl.iDa), but in v 16 the possessors are characterized by their moral character (fwArA / qyDica). In both verses there are strong isomorphic syntactic relationships between the members of the paralleled cola both on surface and deep structure levels. The syntactic relationships of v 10:15a and v 10:15b are particularly interesting in the crossover manner in which the pronominal suffixes are used. Verse 16 is a perfectly-formed syntactic isomorphism. The syntactic differences are the use of pronominal suffixes in v 15 and the use of prepositional phrases in v 16.

¹³R. E. Murphy has the best example of this method (*Wisdom Literature: Job, Proverbs, Ruth, Canticles, Ecclesiastes, and Esther*, [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981]). Others have attempted a more macroscopic structural unity of the whole of Proverbs 10-29 (see P. W. Skehan, *Studies in Israelite Poetry and Wisdom* [CBQMS 1; Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association, 1971] and a rather inane supporting article by Stephen Brown ["Structured Parallelism in the Composition and Formation of Canonical Books: A Rhetorical Critical Analysis of Proverbs 10:1-22:16," Paper presented at the Thirty-Fourth Annual National Meeting of the Evangelical Theological

Society, 1982)). G. Bostrom (*Paronomasi I Den Aldre Hebreiska Maschallitteraturen: Med Sarskild Hansyn Till Proverbia* [Lund: Gleerup, 1928)) and others have done better.

This is a case in which theme plays a major role. Both are clearly economic in nature--which the semantic level established just by the rich treasury of economic terms used. There is a very strong similarity in the common theme of the benefits/problems of wealth. In both cases there is a positive evaluation of some aspect of wealth followed by a negative evaluation. Verse 15 comments on the inherent benefits of wealth's ability to bring security to the wealthy and on the plight of being poor. Lest one weigh economic matters too heavily, v 16 is juxtaposed to bring ones thinking about wealth back into the moral realm. Wealth without morality is death. Because of the nexus of these two verses, one can see the necessity of wealth's being accompanied by righteousness if one is to secure one's existence. Thus, recognizing the pair as a collectional literary unit that is hermeneutically interactive leads to a higher lever of interpretation and recognition of canonical intent.

Separateness

Verses 13 and 14 are about the use of the tongue. There is some vocabulary overlap with 10:15-16 in hTAHim;. The verbal clauses in both v 13 and v 14 contrast with the verbless clauses in the 10:15-16 pair. Thus, there is a slight connection to the preceding verses.

Another catchword does occur in 10:17, as Murphy well notes.¹⁴ Clearly one of the isomorphic syntactic structures that welds 10:16 together is the prepositional phrase featuring l + noun of life/destruction. When 10:17 picks up the exact prepositional phrase, surely it is not just coincidental. So 10:17 is linked to 10:16 through a catchword, whereas there is no such bond between 10:15 and 10:16. Is this pair, then, really a triad or a string?¹⁵ The real distance between the themes of 10:15-16 and 10:17 should be noticed. Verse 17 employs instructional wisdom vocabulary regarding the benefits of keeping rsAUM and the problems of forsaking tHakaOT. This is standard didactic language and has no direct connection to the economic considerations of the preceding pair. Thus, although there is a catchword linking the 10:15-16 pair to what follows, it does not disturb the closeness of the pair. Verse 17 itself appears to be a transitional verse back to the theme of speech (10:18-21; cf. 10:13-14).

A Positionally Cohesive Pair: Proverbs 13:21-22

Prov 13:21-22 provides an example of the importance of position in sentential pairing.

¹⁴Murphy, *Wisdom Literature*, 64. Murphy's comments on Proverbs 10ff. beautifully highlight many of these thematic and catchword connections (pp. 68ff.).

¹⁵The demonstration of how Prov 10:1-11:1 is crafted together as a literary unit has been proved elsewhere; see Ted Hildebrandt, "Proverbial Poetry: Its Setting and Syntax" (Th.D. diss., Grace Theological Seminary, 1985).

:bOF-Ml.,way; MyqiyDica-tx,v; hfArA JDeraT; MyxiF.AAHa
 :xFeOH lyHe qyDicala NUpcAv; MynibA-yneB; lyHin;ya bOF

Misfortune pursues sinners,

but prosperity is the reward of the righteous.

A good man leaves an inheritance for his children's children,

but a sinner's wealth is stored up for the righteous.

Cohesion

Semantically, how are these two verses related? Verse 21 starts with the same root word with which v 22 ends (MyxiF.AHa / xFeOH). Because of the frequency of this root, the repetition by itself would not indicate any strong sense of cohesion. However, when the end of v 21 (bOF) and the beginning of v 22 have exactly the same word, a very interesting repetitional chiasm occurs (MyxiFAHa + bOF // bOF + xFeOH). It appears that the beginnings and endings are key positions for such pairing.

Though the word roots themselves are repeated, they are varied morphologically (MyxiF.AHa / xFeOH). Likewise, bOF in v 21b refers to prosperity, while in v 22a it means one's good character. This semantic difference--using repetition as a means of variation--calls the reader to sharper discernment.¹⁶ That the repetition is accompanied by morphological variation (plural/singular) should not be overlooked.

The theme of prosperity/misfortune pursuing the righteous/sinner is very frequent in this collection. Verse 22 has the righteous attaining material benefits and even dispossessing the sinner.

Syntactically, v 21a contains an object noun which is an experiencer + an active verb + a subject abstract noun which is the agent (Obj:N:Experiencer + V:Active + Subj:N:Agent). Isomorphically, v 21b also has the same basic syntactic structure in the same order. In v 22a there is a subject noun which is the agent + an active verb + an object noun phrase which experiences the action of the verb (Subj:N:Agent + V:Active + Obj:NP:Experiencer). Notice that the reversal of syntactic ordering, however, gives bOF its initial position. Verse 22b begins with a predicating passive participle + a prepositional phrase which has the experiencer (qyDica) + a subject noun phrase which is the patient. Placing the subject last makes the inclusio with the xFH root in v 21a. Prov 13:21-22 is a pair that highlights the features of the first and last positions and the interactive relationships and variations semantically which can take place even in repetitional catchwords.

Separateness

The preceding verse (13:20) thematically focuses on the character-shaping impact of those one associates with. It is dominated by wisdom

¹⁶Susan R. Suleiman, "Redundancy and the 'Readable' Text," *Poetics Today* 1.3 (1980) 119-42.

terms, with no real connection to the character/consequence theme of the following pair. Syntactically it is diverse and semantically there are no catchwords or parallels.

Although 13:23 is about economics, which could link it to 13:22, the differences demonstrate that it does not weaken the tightness of the 13:21-22 pair. There are no common catchwords, and the images of eating and a field are distant from the more economically oriented terms used in v 22. Syntactically they are also diverse.

Thus, 13:21-22 is a pair that is connected by means of significant catchwords. The nexus, however, is due more to positional significance than shared semantic meaning of the repeated words.

A Thematically/Syntactically Tight Pair: Proverbs 15:1-2

This final example, which will be commented on briefly, was picked largely because of the absence of a catchword or direct semantic parallels between word units. The connection takes place on the levels of syntax and message/theme.

:JxA-hl,fEya bc,f,-rbad;U hmAHe bywiYA j`r.a-hn,fEma
:tl,U,x, fayBiya Myliysik; ypiU tfaDA byFyTe MymikaHE NOWl;

A gentle answer turns away wrath,
but a harsh word stirs up anger.

The tongue of the wise commends knowledge,
but the mouth of the fool gushes folly.

Cohesion

Clearly in 15:1-2 there are no shared catchwords, even with the presence of high-frequency words (MymiKAHE, MyliysiK;, ypi, NOWl;, dbad;, hmAHe).

Obviously there are semantic relationships, but the point here is that they are not directly on the word level.

Thematically, these two verses stand as a unit. Both address the power of speech. The first focuses on the ability of speech to diffuse/stir up anger and the second on its ability to distribute wisdom/folly. The tremendous impact of words is the shared theme. The second verse fronts the speech organ (ypi / NOWl;), while the first verse links the verbal expression (hn,fEma / rbad;) to character qualities (j`ra. / bc,f,), which determine the impact and direction which that powerful oral expression will take.

Syntactically, it is interesting that the two sentences are isomorphic. Recent discussions on parallelism have shown that restricting parallelism to semantic categories (synonymous, antithetic, synthetic, emblematic) is myopic. Parallelism also is syntactic in nature and interesting plays may be seen when deep and surface grammatical variations and equivalences are

discovered.¹⁷ The question is: Are there syntactical parallels that bind the two sentences together? Both can be classified by O'Connor's constraint system as 1 3 4, which occurs in 20.9 percent of the cola in Proverbs 10-15. It should be observed, however, that the 1 3 4 configuration in the "b" colon is quite rare (18 times in Proverbs 10-15 as opposed to 59 times in the frontal position). Thus, to have both verses with the 1 3 4 configuration in both "a" and "b" cola is rare. The syntactic linkage manifests the same formulas that isomorphically bind the cola of each sentence together and are shared between the verses (Subj:NP [N + Qual] + Verb + Obj:N). One should not fail to notice the repetition of hiphil imperfect in all four cola. These features all add to the feeling of sameness due to a shared syntactic architecture.

Separateness

The preceding verse (14:35) is about a servant's relationship to the king (delight/wrath). There are no catchwords in common, and the theme and syntax are diverse. Similarly, the following verse (15:3) is a Yahweh-saying addressing the issue of his omniscience. There are no repetitional words, and the theme and syntax (nonverbal versus verbal) are divergent.

Thus, 15:1-2 stands as a non-catchword pair. Nevertheless, it is bound because of theme and syntax. It stands by itself and shows that bonding takes place through a wider variety of means than is normally acknowledged. Even the categories of semantics, syntax, and theme may be expanded profitably--looking at phonetic linking patterns and structural bonding using proverbial forms (e.g., 15:16-17).

Summary

These five examples have been chosen from many others in an attempt to demonstrate a possible technique for isolating such pairs and for showing the interactive categories used by the editors in building their collections. What such categories of construction mean for interpretation is a subject open for exploration. The goal of this study is simply to establish that binding of individual sentences into pairs is a discrete level of composition that should not be ignored in analysis.

¹⁷Perhaps the most insightful and comprehensive treatment yet produced is O'Connor's *Hebrew Verse Structure*. The most concise and comprehensible has been Adele Berlin's *The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985). Other excellent works include Stephen Geller, *Parallelism in Early Biblical Poetry* (HSM 20; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1979); Wilfred Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry: A Guide to Its Techniques* (Sheffield: JSOT: 1984); E. Greenstein, "How Does Parallelism Mean?" in *A Sense of Text* (JQRSup; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1982). Also see the writer's dissertation, which correlated syntactic deep and surface structural relationships in the context of bi-colonic parallelism (Hildebrandt, "Proverbial Poetry: Its Setting and Syntax").

V. Pairing Cohesional Principles

Having analyzed 124 verses that are bound into 62 pairs, what principles of cohesion were discovered? What interesting patterns emerge on the levels of semantics, syntax, and theme?

Semantic Cohesion

Several principles of semantic cohesion were observed. First, and perhaps the most frequent and easily recognized, were catchword repetitions. Such repetitions were often of high-frequency words.¹⁸ More significant for this study was the occurrence of lower-frequency catchwords, making coincidence a rather unlikely explanation.¹⁹ In Prov 26:20-21, for example, there is a shared use of the low-frequency words *Mycife* and *wxe*.

Multi-catchword parallels were perhaps the strongest argument for the pairing phenomenon. This category of semantic identity virtually eliminates the possibility of collectional coincidence. Numerous cases of multi-catchwords were found (e.g., 14:26-27; 15:8-9; 23:13-14; 23:24-25; 26:4-5; 26:20-21).

Besides these obvious repetitions, cohesion in sentential pairs may also take the form of parallel words from common word pairs characterized by large areas of semantic overlap or by frequent pairing in the poetic corpus.²⁰ Broader parallels may also exist, such as the use of *Elohim* in 25:2 and *MyimawA* in 25:3, which is normally associated with *Elohim* (e.g., 24:3-4; 25:6-7).

So far the discussion has centered on the element of semantic sameness linking the pairs together. How are those cohesional, semantically shared elements varied? What processes of variation of the catchwords may be

¹⁸Examples of wisdom vocabulary and their use/misuse in attempts to find wisdom influence outside of the wisdom corpus can be found in Whybray, *Intellectual Tradition*, 124-42, or in R. B. Y. Scott, *The Way of Wisdom* (New York: Macmillan, 1971) 121-22. H. Deusberg and I. Fransen offer an obese list with 200 words, which includes words that cannot be said to be characteristic of wisdom (e.g., *dabar*; ' *elohim*, et al.) (*Les scribes inspirees: Introduction aux livres Sapientiaux de la Bible* [Belgium: Editions de Maredsous, 1966] 934-35). In the pairs, the following catchwords were found: righteous (10:2-3), wicked (10:2-3), sinner (13:21-22), fool (12:15-16), friend (14:20-21), king (16:12-13), woman (19:13-14), mouth (10:31-32), heart (15:13-14), desire (21:25-26), Yahweh (21:30; 15:8-9), happy (23:24-25; 29:2-3; 15:20-21), and strife (18:18-19). Murphy's *Wisdom Literature* beautifully exposes this feature in the proverbial sentence literature.

¹⁹E.g., abomination (15:8-9), strong (18:10-11), imbibe (23:20-21), separate (25:4-5), gold (25:11-12), wood (26:20-21), trust (28:25-26), searching (25:2-3), and fruit (18:20-21).
²⁰E.g., wealth/wages/income (10:15-16), tongue/lips/mouth (10:31-32), grace/lovingkindness (11:16-17), hatred/despise (14:20-21), love/kindness (14:20-21), love/delight (15:8-9), lacking judgment/fool (15:20-21), pride/haughty (16:18-19, from the same root), happy/rejoice (23:15-16), heart/inner parts (23:15-16), no (*lxa*) / no (*xlo*) (23:17-18), house/rooms (24:3-4), wisdom/understanding/knowledge (24:3-4), or kings/nobles (25:6-7).

detected? Simple morphological variation may occur (fwAr, [sg.]/[Pl.] 10:2-3). Linking words may be contrasted by constructing them with opposites. Notice 10:31-32, where hp, is constructed with the qyDica in 10:31a, but in 10:32b it is constructed with the MyfiwAr; (cf. 11:5-6 although less contrastive; 27:1-2; 12:18-19; 15:13-14). Another variational technique is the use of the same word but with different components of its meaning (see the discussion above on 13:21-22). The paralleling of words, rather than catchword repetition, is another variational technique. In 17:27-28, for instance, one sentence uses a mouth part, whereas the other sentence uses the product of the mouth (vyrAmAxE). Paralleled words may come from an equivalent root word but be varied syntactically. For example, the noun form of a word may parallel the verbal form of the same word root (16:18-19; 15:20-21; 13:7-8; 10:31-32). Finally, the deep syntactic role of catchwords in the sentences may be very diverse. The role of the bxA in 19:13-14 is quite diverse. In 19:13 he participates in receiving the brunt of his son's folly, whereas in 19:14 he is the agent who gives an inheritance to his children. Similarly, in 19:28 the reference is to the false witness who CyliyA at justice (verb) and in v 29 the Mycile (noun) receives the punishment of justice.

In some cases the semantic parallels on the word level may be quite weak or nonexistent (15:1-2; 17:27-28; 21:30-31; 22:22-23; 22:24-25; 24:13-14, 17-18, 21-22, 28-29; 26:18-19; 27:3-4, 15-16). Sometimes the linking may take place through a larger rhetorical device or wisdom form, as in the frequent cases of admonitional pairs, which are marked by the formula lxa + prohibition, yKi + explanation (e.g., 24:1-2, 15-16, 19-20; 22:24-25; 23:18-19, 20-21, et al.). Two better-than proverbs are linked in 15:16-17 and two simile proverbs in 10:25-26. Phonetic features seldom come into play but may be present in 14:26-27 (also 14:20-21). Finally, there may be semantically/syntactically mixed links. The repeated negative xlo + hipihil verb is a semantic/syntactic link in the 10:2-3 pair (see 24:28-29).

The placement of repeated terms is also significant in several pairs. There is a strong tendency to place catchwords in initial positions of the first cola of each sentence (10:2-3, 25-26; 11:5-6; 15:13-14; 16:12; 23:24; 25:4; 27:1). There may be linking in the initial positions of both second cola (15:16; 25:16-17). Occasionally the catchword is in the initial position of the first colon of the first sentence and in the first word in the second colon of the second sentence (18:19-20; 10:31-32). Other times there may be linking of the initial position in the second colon of the first sentence and the first colon of the second sentence (28:25-26). In 14:26-27, hvAhy; txar;yi is put in the initial position both times although varied in v 26 by the addition of the preposition. More complex positional relationships can be seen in Prov 23:17-18; 13:21-22; 18:20-21; 24:8-9; and 25:6-7. An inclusio occurs when the beginning initial position (MyxiF.AHa, 13:21a) links to the end of the second sentence second colon (xFeOH, 13:22b). A similar chiasmic effect is seen in 23:17-18, where the initial position links tail (v 17b) to head (v 18a) and head

23:17-18; 13:21-22; 18:20-21; 24:8-9; and 25:6-7. An inclusio occurs when the beginning initial position (MyxiF.AHa, 13:21a) links to the end of the second sentence second colon (xFeOH, 13:22b). A similar chiastic effect is seen in 23:17-18, where the initial position links tail (v 17b) to head (v 18a) and head (v 17a) to the final position of the tail (v 18b). Last, the final position is sometimes used to link the sentences (head to tail, both final, 25:6-7). Thus, colonic endings and especially the initial positions are significant in the compositional process of linking paired sentences.

Syntactic Cohesion

Syntactically, how may sentences be bound into pairs? It should be acknowledged that the syntactic linking is not as conclusive as the semantic and thematic aspects. Nevertheless, it has been proved that syntactic linking was utilized by the sage as he constructed the syntactically parallelistic bicolon as well as when he juxtaposed the sentences into pairs (see Prov 15:1f.; 26:4f.; 15:8f. above). Numerous pairs showed little or no syntactic paralleling (e.g., 15:20-21; 18:20-21; 21:30-31; 22:22-23; 23:17-18; 25:2-3; 26:18-19; 27:1-2; 28:25-26; 29:2-3). Even though there may be surface syntactic variation, there may be deep grammatical relationships which are transformationally related (see above on 26:4-5). In the second cola of Prov 15:8 and 9, for example, there is shared deep pronominal back-referencing to Yahweh, but it is accomplished by means of two different surface syntactic means. In v 8b it is through a pronominal suffix attached to a noun (OnOcr;), whereas in v 9b the back-referencing takes place through the third person of the verb (bhAx<y,).

The two strongest means of syntactic bonding are direct dependence and linking particles (e.g., NP, in 24:17-18; NKe 24:13-14; and U 24:3-4). In Prov 22:24-25, the 3d masc. sg. pronominal suffix on vtAHOr;xo in v 25a points back to the JxA lfaBa man of v 24. Thus, these sentences are dependent syntactically and must be taken as a pair because the second verse cannot stand by itself. This dependence phenomenon occurs in many of the paired admonitions (see 22:26-27; 23:13-14; 24:1-2, 21-22; 25:6-7, although not exclusively, e.g., 21:25-26). The back-referencing to the previous verse may occur by a pronominal suffix (22:27; 23:14; 24:22), by the person of the verb (22:27; 25:7), or by both methods (24:2).

Shared syntactic units are quite common and add to the feeling of cohesion without demanding it. The shared medial waw in the first colon is rather rare in these collections and the fact that two juxtaposed sentences exhibit this same feature strongly suggests intentional pairing (10:25a/26a; 27:3a/4a; and 15:16b/17a). The heavy use of prepositions (26:20-21) and a common preposition in conjunction with a verb (23:13-14) also give the feeling of sameness.

Perhaps the most frequent syntactic unit that is shared as a result of the high frequency of its usage is the two-unit noun phrase. Prov 12:18-19 has a rather normal, thrice-repeated, parallel noun phrase construction composed of a mouth part (tongue/lips/tongue) + a character quality (wise/true/false). Here, as in 16:12-13, the shared noun phrase may repeat one catchword and

link it to another that is antithetical (delight of kings/abomination of kings; 10:31-32). In 16:12-13 the morphological repetition of the plural MykilAm; should not be overlooked (cf. 11:5-6; 15:13-14). Antithesis is achieved in Prov 10:31-32 by constructing shared words with antithetical mates in parallel noun phrases (qyDica-yPi / MyfiwAr;-ypi). In 15:8-9, however, the common noun phrases are varied morphologically (MyfiwAr; Hbaz, [pl.]/; fwArA j`r,D,, [sg.]). There need not be a word repetition to link the two similarly constructed noun phrases. In Prov 15:1-2, the j`r.a-hn,fEma and MymikaHE NOWl are parallel noun phrases without a repeated catchword (cf. 10:15-16). Because of the prevalence of NP forms in the sentential collections, such phenomena bind, but may not be used as conclusive proof.

Syntactic bonding on the clause level strengthens the feeling of coherence where multiple syntactical relationships are held in common. Perhaps the most interesting example is in Prov 24:3-4. Not only are the semantic parallels and developments related, but the isomorphic syntactic structure between the two sentences is both rare and remarkably close. Verse 3a has the following syntactic formula Mod:PrepP (Prep + N) + V:Niphal + S:N. Several things are rather rare in this colon. First, there are no noun phrases in this first colon verbal clause. Second, the use of the Niphal verb with the subject trailing and prepositional phrase fronted is unusual. It is interesting that v 4a has the exact same formula, even to the point of having a niphal verb and the lack of two-unit noun phrases. Other examples of isomorphic/homomorphic syntactic bonding between paired sentences may be seen in Prov 15:1-2; 10:31-32; 13:21a/22a; and 25:16b/17b. Sometimes the connection may be simpler, as in 10:2-3 where the initial xlo + verb:hiphil links the two sentences. Quite often there are pairs with matching verbless clauses (14:26-27; 10:15-16; 15:8-9; 18:10-11) where the two-unit noun phrases appear paralleled. Because of the frequency of nonverbal clauses in these collections, too much should not be made of this point; but, again, it should not be ignored.

Syntax plays a unique role in giving the reader a feeling of sameness even when the words are diverse. Because of the recent discovery and development of the role of syntactic parallelism in bonding the poetic bi-colon together, it is not unreasonable to have found that this method is also employed to a limited extent in bonding sentential pairs.

Thematic Cohesion

Theme will be explored briefly using the categories that Alan Dundes has made in attempting to define a proverb in modern folklore studies.²¹ A

²¹Dundes, "On the Structure of the Proverb," *Proverbium* 25 (1975) 961-73, reprinted in

Wolfgang Mieder and Alan Dundes, *The Wisdom of Many: Essays on the Proverb* (New York: Garland, 1981) 43-64. This volume on paremiology is indispensable to anyone attempting to unlock the nature and meaning of proverbial material. See also Wolfgang Mieder, *International*

proverbial sentence is composed of a topic and comment. It also has a message, and often an image is used. Thus, theme will be looked at from these four perspectives (topic/comment/message/image).

The topics of sentential pairs may be very close (11:5-6, MymiTA tqad;ci / MyriwAy; tqad;ci [cf. 21:25-26, where the topics are identical]) or more distant (15:1-2, j`r.a-hn,fEma / MymikaHE NOwl; cf. 12:18). Sometimes the topics may be antithetically related (16:12-13, MykilAm; tbaFEOT/MikilAm; NOcr;) or developmental (13:21-22, bOF / xFeOH lyHe). Sometimes there may be no relationship between the topics (10:2-3, 31 fwar, tOrc;Ox / hvAhy;, cf. 15:8-9).

The comments within the pairs may also be parallel. Likewise, they vary in closeness from repetitional equivalence (15:8-9, hvAhy; tbaFEOT) to metaphor/literal (10:15-16, Oz.fu tvar;qi/ Myy.Ha), to a broader relationship (13:2-3, bOF/Owp;na rmewo). As with the topics, sometimes paired comments may use antithetical relationships (16:12-13, MykilAm; tbaFEOT / MykilAm; NOcr;). The topics may be very similar while the comments are diverse (12:18-19, Topics: speech/speech; Comments: hurt/healing//longevity/vanishing) or the comments may be close with the topics somewhat diverse (15:8-9, Comments: abomination to Yahweh/abomination to Yahweh; Topics: wicked's sacrifice/wicked's way).

The images used in the pairs are seldom paralleled (10:15-16; 12:18-19; 13:2-3, although there are rare exceptions, 18:10-11, 20-21). Sometimes, however, simply the fact that both juxtaposed proverbs use a metaphor/simile binds them together (10:25-26; 14:26-27; 27:15-16) even though the images are diverse. In one instance a metaphor was used in the pair, but in a developmental manner (24:3-4, build house/fill room). When images are used, quite frequently there is a movement from a metaphorical image to the reality or application being discussed (25:4-5; 24:13-14; 25:16-17, not eating too much honey/not visiting friends too long).

The message, or the deep movement between the topic and comment, is often related in the proverbial pairs. Proverbs 11:5-6 shares the common message that righteousness leads to success and wickedness to destruction. The message relationship may be developmental, as in 10:15-16. Verse 15 states that wealth is better than poverty, and v 16 develops the idea by showing that righteousness is better than wealth-thereby highlighting the character of the one possessing the wealth as the key factor. Much more could be done in terms of how the actual message is linguistically developed, but these examples demonstrate that theme (topic/comment/image/message) is used to tie proverbial pairs together.

VI. Conclusion

The sage attempted to order his world into poetically constructed proverbial sentences by isolating and pulling the momentary threads of

Proverb Scholarship: An Annotated Bibliography (New York: Garland, 1982) for a 527-page annotated bibliography on international paremiological studies.

existence from the tapestry of Israelite society and framing them in Yahwistically embroidered formal wisdom structures. He attempted to clarify the complex confusion of the particulars of experience by highlighting life's order through patterned universals. He crafted his perceptions and diverse experiences into linguistic paradigms--the very literary form of which reflected how he perceived the essential elements of life. Great linguistic/poetic care was taken as he crafted his words into atomic proverbial bi-cola. The sages then, with the same care, gathered those individual sentences into collections. It is the crafting of the collectional level that may well reflect how the sage moved from the unitary, digital elements of his existence into the complex, analog flow of life. It has been suggested that as the transition is made from the atomistic, proverbial sentence to the proverbial collection, the proverbial pair stands as one molecular element at the collectional level. To ignore higher levels of formal composition is to ignore meaning on that level.

It has been shown that the relationships between paired sentences are complex and fascinating. Five examples out of 62 pairs (Prov 26:4-5; 15:8-9; 10:16-17; 13:21-22; 15:1-2) were proffered, as proof both that such a pairing phenomenon exists and that the pairs are as beautifully crafted as the individual sentences themselves. Such artistry goes far beyond the simple catchword technique. It has been shown also that the pairs stand by themselves as discrete units of composition.

The principles employed by the collectors were exposed under the categories of semantics, syntax, and theme. Semantically, numerous examples of high frequency, low frequency and multiple catchwording eliminated the disclaimer that such connections were just coincidental or unintentional. Parallel words, with morphological or semantic variation, and positional significance disclosed the intricate beauty of the pairs. Syntax was another method by which a feeling of cohesion in the paired sentences was achieved. While many pairs showed no syntactic cohesion, many did through the bonding of syntactic dependence or linking particles. Shared syntactic units--especially the two-unit noun phrase, medial *waw*, and heavy use of prepositions--added to the feeling of sameness. On the clause level, frequently there were homomorphic/isomorphic syntactic parallels between the respective paired cola. Thematic bonding was briefly analyzed and interrelationships explored from the perspectives of common topics, comments, images, and message.

This paper has demonstrated that the proverbial pair is a unit of composition by which the proverbial collectors welded the atomistic proverbial sentences into larger units. The fact that such compositional units were used suggests that the proverbial sentences should be examined from collectional as well as sentential perspectives.