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PROVERBIAL STRINGS:
COHESION IN PROVERBS 10

TED HILDEBRANDT

While most commentators take Proverbs 10–22 as a haphazard collection of proverbial sentences, this paper seeks to show that the sentences are cohesively ordered. The "proverbial string" is proposed as one such larger compositional unit. Four strings were discovered in Proverbs 10 (10:1-5, 6-11, 12-21, 22-30) with the sentences bonded by catchwords, rhetorical devices, themes, sound echoes, and shared syntactic constructions. The sentences of Proverbs 10–22 are an artistically woven tapestry with the position of each thread contributing to the beauty of the whole.

*   *   *

INTRODUCTION

F OR the vast majority of interpreters Prov 10:1–22:16 is a disorderly collage of independent proverbs. J. Thompson complains: "As for our canonical proverbs in particular, they fail to reach us, it would seem, for . . . they are jumbled together willy-nilly into collections."[1]

Some, having discovered common themes or catchwords, allow for small proverbial clusters, but quickly go on to minimize the significance of such canonical collectional processes. So 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."[2]

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[1] J. Thompson, *The Form and Function of Proverbs* (The Hague: Mouton, 1974) 15. R. N. Gordon, "Motivation in Proverbs," *Biblical Theology* 25.3 (1975) 49. W. O. E. Oesterly, *The Book of Proverbs* (London: Westminster Commentaries, 1929) 125, 73, 77). Keil and Delitzsch, *Proverbs* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973) 208; R. N. Whybray, *The Intellectual Tradition* (NY: Walter de Gruyter, 1974) 67; R. K. Harrison, *Introduction ot the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969) 1017; J. Paterson, *The Wisdom of Israel* (London: Lutterworth and Abingdon, 1961) 63. McKane feels complete freedom to abandon the present canonical order totally restructuring the text (W. McKane, *Proverbs: A New Approach* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970) 413-15. Even G. von Rad expresses his annoyance at the "lack of order" (*Wisdom in Israel* [Nashville: Abingdon, 1972] 113).

[2] C. Rylaarsdam, *The Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, The Song of Solomon*, The Layman's Bible Commentary, ed. B. N. Kelly (Richmond: John Knox, 1964) 48.

On the other side, P. Skehan, followed by S. Brown, suggests that the whole of Prov 10:1–22:16 is numerically composed of precisely 375 sentences (Solomon's name = 375) with mechanical 25 verse sub-units.[3] The chimerical 25 verse sub-units, however, do not stand up to close analysis.

A methodology is needed that will expose and appreciate the principles utilized in constructing the proverbial collections.[4] Literary shaping on the level of the collection suggests that there may also be interpretive significance on that level. The focus here will be in demon-strating that Proverbs 10 is bound into four cohesive "proverbial strings." Some initial speculations will be made as to their significance.

COHESIONAL FEATURES IN PROVERBS 10

The cohesiveness of the proverbial sentences can be seen by utiliz-ing a linguistic methodology that includes phonology, syntax, seman-tics, and rhetorical levels of analysis.[5] G. Boström may be consulted

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[3]P. Skehan, *Studies in Israelite Poetry and Wisdom*, CBQMS I (Washington, DC: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1971) 71, 25, 35f. S. Brown, "Structured Parallelism in the Composition and Formation of Canonical Books" (paper presented at SBL Meetings in Chicago, November 1988).

[4]Studies which have moved in this direction are: G. E. Bryce, "Another Wisdom 'Book' in Proverbs," *JBL* 91 (1972) 145–57, and a dissertation by R. Van Leeuwen, "Context and Meaning in Proverbs 25–27," SBLDS 96 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988). For Proverbs 11, O. Ploger, "Zur Auslegung der Sentenzensammlungen dés Proverbia-buches," *Probleme biblischer Theologie*, ed. H. W. Wolff (Munich: C. Kaiser, 1971) 402–16. R. N. Whybray, "Yahweh-sayings and their Contexts in Proverbs 10, 1–22,16," *La Sagesse de l'Ancien Testament*, ed. M. Gilbert (Gembloux: Leuven University, 1979) 153–65. H. J. Hermisson, *Studien zur israelitischen Spruchweisheit*, WMANT 28 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1968) 171–83. In Sumerian proverbial collections B. Alster, *Studies in Sumerian Proverbs* (Copenhagen: Akademish Forlag, 1974) 14; J. M. Lindenberger, *The Aramaic Proverbs of Ahigar* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1983) 21. In modern international collections M. Kuusi gives seven methods by which international proverbial collections are ordered ("Towards an International Type-System of Proverbs," *Proverbium* 19 [1972] 698–71). James Crenshaw's classic study "Prole-gomena" in *Studies in Ancient Israelite Wisdom* (NY: KTAV, 1976) 14. Crenshaw has a list of seven structuring principles which he has observed: "a common letter (Pr. 11:9–12b; 20:7–9; 24–26); the same introductory word (Pr. 15:13–14, 16–17); the same idea (Pr. 16); the use of an acrostic (Pr. 31:10–31); paradoxical unity (Pr. 26:4–5); and numbers (Pr. 30:24–28). Thematic units characterize later proverbs (Pr. 1–9) and Sirach. . . ." Cf. also R. E. Murphy's excellent synthesis: *Wisdom Literature: Job, Proverbs, Ruth, Canticles, Ecclesiastes, and Esther* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981) 68. T. A. Hilde-brandt, "Proverbial Pairs: Compositional Units in Proverbs 10–29," *JBL* 107.2 (June 1988) 207–24.

[5]Cf. Steven Perry ("Structural patterns in Proverbs 10:1–22:16: A study in biblical Hebrew stylistics," Ph.D. diss., University of Texas at Austin, 1987). Jack Berezov is very aware of cohesion and his excellent isolation of the various forms of the sayings has proven very helpful ("Single-line proverbs: A study of the sayings collected in Proverbs 10–22:16 and 25–29," Ph.D. diss., Hebrew Union College, 1987).

concerning letter/sound repetitions[6] and Murphy for catchwords and thematic links.[7] The following chart seeks to expose the relationships found in Prov 10:1–5.

STRING #1: Prov 10:1–5

Prov 10:1 lexically links itself with 10:5 via double repetition of a "'son' + Character quality" (10:1, wise/foolish; 10:5, prudent/disgraceful) enveloping the string. While 10:1 is held apart from the theme of wealth which is maintained in 10:2–5. Prov 10:1 seems to provide a hinge which links back to themes developed in Proverbs 1–9 ("wise/foolish son") while providing a title for the sentence proverbs which will dominate Prov 10:1–22:16.

Prov 10:2–3 forms a proverbial pair centered around the common theme of the relationship of the wicked/righteous to wealth/poverty. The rare initial לֹא + Hiphil imperfect verb, syntactically binds the two verses together. Lexemically, 10:2 and 3 form a chiasm triggered by the catch-roots "righteousness"/"righteous" and "wicked":

10:2	**Wickedness** wealth—no value	(A)	
	Righteousness delivers from death		(B)
10:3	**Righteous**—no hunger (Yahweh supplies)		(B)
	Wicked's desire is frustrated	(A)	

These catch-roots are varied morphologically in gender ("righteousness," fem./"righteous," masc.) and number ("wicked," sing./pl.).
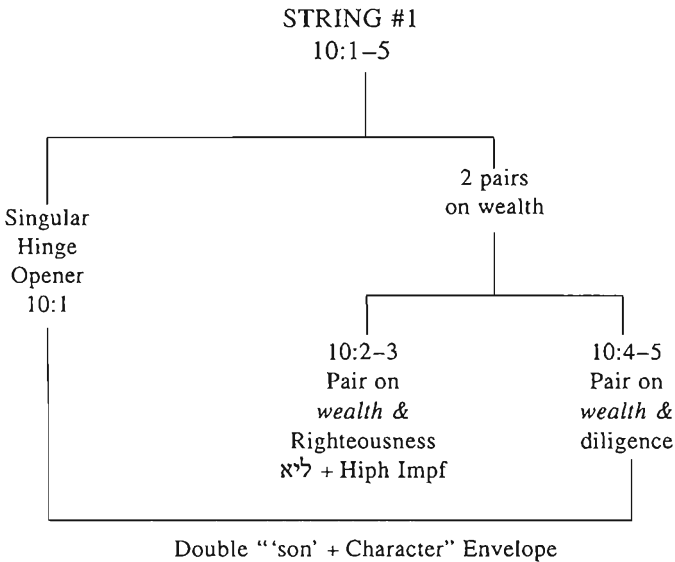
A second pair, Prov 10:4–5, continues the theme of wealth/poverty focusing on its relationship to diligence/laziness. Again, there is a pair bonding chiasm which is semantically triggered.

10:4	Lax hands—poor	(A)	
	Diligent hands—wealth		(B)
10:5	Working son—prudent		(B)
	Sleeping son—shameful	(A)	

The Qal active participle עֹשֶׂה in 10:4a may through assonance ring in אֹגֵר which begins 10:5a. Thematically the cohesion is clear although catch-words are absent. This lack of lexical linkage within the pair encourages the reader to discover the enveloping of the doubled noun phrase ["son" + Character] structure between 10:5a/b and 10:1a/b, thus defining the limits of this string.

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[6]G. Boström, *Paronomasi 1 Den Äldre Hebreiska Maschallitteraturen* (Lund: Gleerup, 1928) 118ff. R. Margalit's guidelines will help check the process of determining whether sound links are significant ("Introduction to Ugaritic Prosody," *UF* 7 (1975) 210–13). E.g., the positioning of letters should be more valued if in the initial or final positions.

[7]R. E. Murphy, *Wisdom Literature*, 68.

STRING #1
10:1-5

Double "'son' + Character" Envelope

Translation emphasizing features of cohesion:[8]

1. A *wise son* brings joy to his father,
   but a *foolish son* grief to his mother.

Wealth & Righteousness Pair
2. *No value* are treasures acquired by *wickedness*,
   but *righteousness* delivers from death.
3. *No hunger* will the Lord allow for the *righteous*,
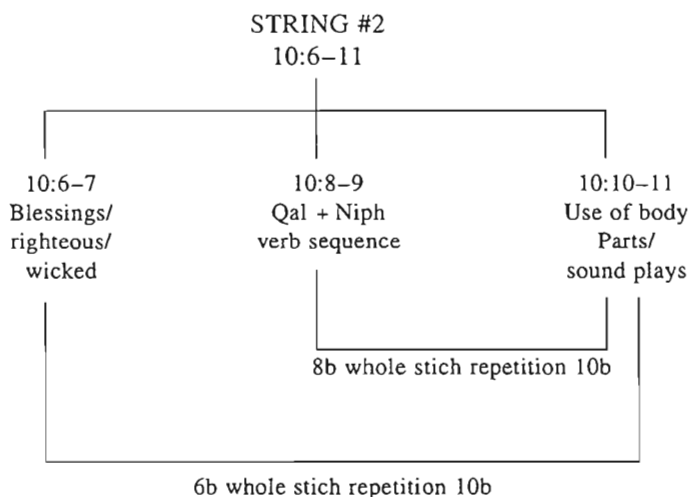   but he thwarts the craving of the *wicked*.

Wealth & Diligence Pair
4. Lazy hands make a man poor,
   but diligent hands bring wealth.
5. He who gathers crops in summer is a *prudent son*,
   but he who sleeps in the harvest is a *disgraceful son*.

In summary, Prov 10:1-5 is composed of two pairs centering on the theme of the relationship of the various character qualities (wicked/righteous [10:2-3]; lazy/diligent [10:4-5]) to wealth/poverty. A sense of closure is triggered by the enveloping doubly repeated "son" + Character noun phrase (10:1a/b, 5a/b).

[8]The translations are adapted from the NIV modifying it to highlight cohesive features present in the Hebrew text.

Translation emphasizing features of cohesion:

STRING #2
10:6–11

10:6–7	10:8–9	10:10–11
Blessings/	Qal + Niph	Use of body
righteous/	verb sequence	Parts/
wicked		sound plays

8b whole stich repetition 10b

6b whole stich repetition 10b

Translation emphasizing features of cohesion:

10:6   *Blessings* are *for* the head of the *righteous*,
       but violence covers the *mouth of the wicked*.
10:7   The memory of the *righteous* is *for blessing*,
       but the *name of the wicked* will rot.

10:8   The wise in heart accept (*Qal*) commands,
       but a chattering fool comes to ruin (*Niph*).
10:9   The man of integrity walks (*Qal*) securely,
       but he who takes crooked paths will be found out (*Niph*).

Concluding Pair
10:10 Winking *eyes* cause grief,
       and a chattering fool comes to ruin.
10:11 Well of life is the *mouth* of the righteous,
       but violence covers the mouth of the wicked.

STRING #2: Prov 10:6–11

The whole-stich repetition of 10:6b in 10:11b provides a clear structural envelop opening and closing this string. The first pair (10:6–7) features the blessedness of the righteous. The shared lexical units [ל, "blessing," and "righteous"] in the first stichs and the repetition of "wicked" in both second stichs tightly draw the two sayings together.

Notice also the morphologically fixed character of "righteous" (masc., sing.) and "wicked" (masc., pl.), although the number of "blessing" is varied. Both 10:6a and 7a have a shared surface grammar (Subject + Prep. Phrase).[9] Thus 10:6-7 is a clear proverbial pair.

Prov 10:8 breaks with the preceding pair being tied to 10:9. While there are no catchwords or strong semantic parallels, there may be some phonetic linkage as Boström has observed.[10] Perhaps the clearest nexus between 10:8 and 9 is syntactic. In 10:8a and 9a, the verbs are both Qal Imperfect 3ms followed by rare final Niphal imperfect verbs (10:8b, 9b). Prov 10:8b may be linked via whole stich repetition to 10:10b which is featured by the weakening of the semantic connection between 10:8 and 10:9.

The lack of antithesis in 10:10 has caused many to strengthen the parallelism by accepting the LXX reading "He who reproves to the face reconciles." It is suggested that the Hebrew text of 10:8b has slipped down into 10:10b improperly.[11] String features such as the shared use of a Body part + Character quality in 10:10a/b and 10:11a/b; the rare final Niphals in 10:8b, 9b, 10b; and the whole stich repetition in 10:10b and 11b suggest that the MT reading of 10:10b is suited to the three pair string (10:6-11). Snell has recently noted that the LXX has a tendency to drop repeated proverbial units.[12] Prov 10:10a and 10:11a are clearly sound-linked in their opening words (מְקוֹר ;קֹרֵץ). The sound link is assonantally reinforced by the pathah/hireq of the second words חַיִּים/עַיִן. Thematically both proverbs tell of the results of the use/misuse of body parts.

The whole stich repetitions draw the two preceding pairs together into the closing pair (10:10-11), thereby forming a tight six-verse string.

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[9]Prov 10:6 and 7 have an interesting surface/deep structure transformation:

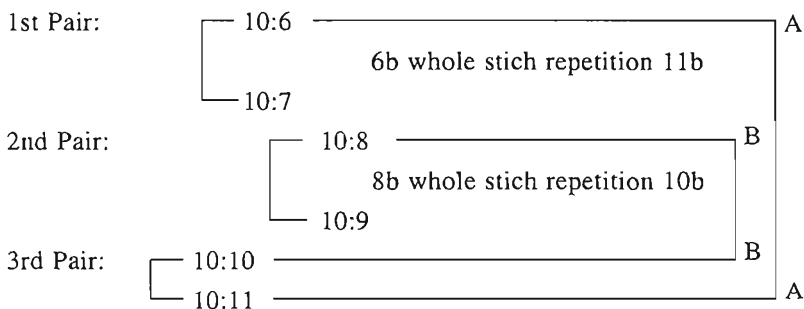10:6a: Subject:N:Benefit [בְּרָכוֹת]   + PP [Prep (ל) + NP:Experiencer (רֹאשׁצַדִּיק)]

10:7a: Subject:NP:Agent [זֵכֶר צַדִּיק] + PP [Prep (ל) + N:Benefit (בְּרָכָה)]

Note in both 6a and 7a there is a Benefit but in 6a the Benefit:N is the subject ["blessings"] and the Experiencer:NP ["head of the righteous"] is imbedded in the Prep Phrase. In 7a the Agent:NP is the subject ["memory of the righteous"] and the Benefit:N ["blessing"] is imbedded in the Prep Phrase. Thus, the deep structure role "Benefit" is shared but its location is reversed in the surface grammar (Subject + Prep Phrase). Kenneth Pike, *Grammatical Analysis* (Dallas: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1982) 33–63; 397–409.

[10]Boström notices the suspicious ט-ב sequence in יִלָּבֵט (10:8b) and בֶּטַח (10:9a). A similar sound repetition is also found in בָּתֹם (10:9a) (Boström, 122).

[11]If the LXX reading is taken the whole stich repetition pattern would disappear. The LXX reading is accepted by McKane, *Proverbs*, 418; R. Scott, *Proverbs-Ecclesiastes* (Anchor Bible: Doubleday, 1965) 81; C. Toy, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Proverbs* in *ICC* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1904) 204; cf. R. B. Y. Scott, R. Alden, K. Aitken, and D. Kidner followed the JB, NEB, RSV and TEV in contrast to the NASB, NIV and KJV.

[12]Wm. Snell, "Twice Told Proverbs" (Eisenbrauns, forthcoming).

1st Pair:
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          ┌─ 10:6 ──────────────────────────────────────┐ A
          │                 6b whole stich repetition 11b
          └─ 10:7
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2nd Pair:
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                 ┌─ 10:8 ──────────────────────────────┐ B
                 │            8b whole stich repetition 10b
                 └─ 10:9
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3rd Pair:
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          ┌─ 10:10 ──────────────────────────────────────┘ B
          └─ 10:11 ──────────────────────────────────────┘ A
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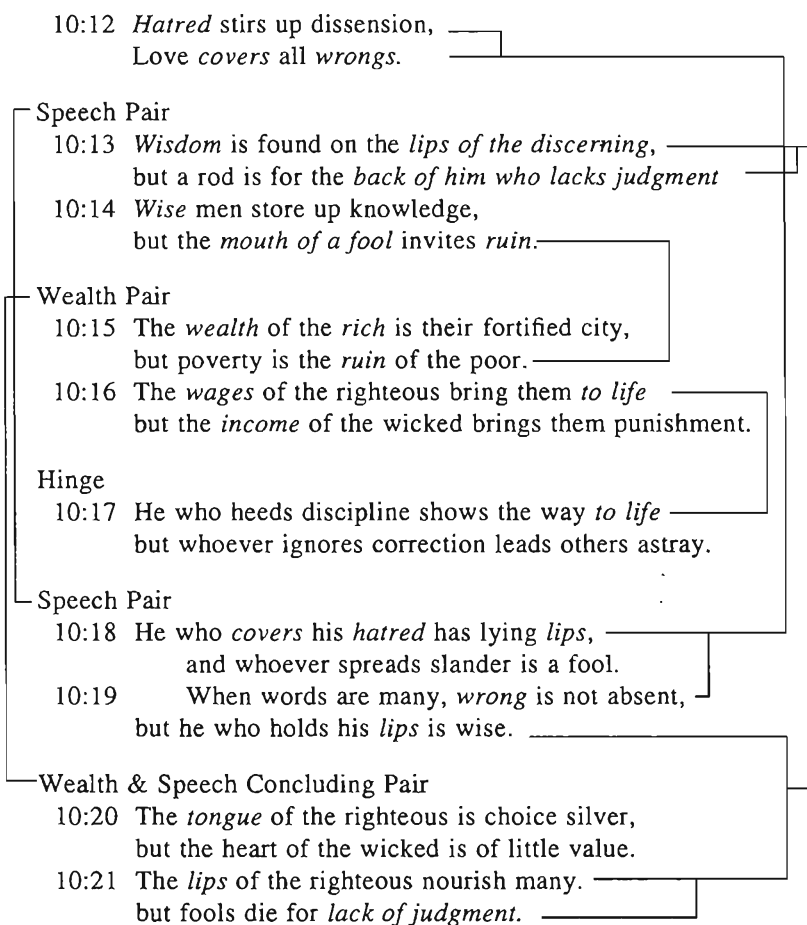
Prov 10:12 is transitional. The catchwords תְּכַסֶּה/יְכַסֶּה provide a clear link between Prov 10:12 and 10:11. Boström observes the commonality in sound between פִּי רְשָׁעִים and פְּשָׁעִים—the latter being a collapsed form of the former.[13] Prov 10:12 links downward into the next section (10:18f.). Thus Prov 10:12, though it hinges to the tail of the previous string (10:6–11), functions mainly as an opener to 10:12–21 even as 10:1 was for 10:1–5.

STRING #3
Proverbs 10:21–21

[13]Boström, *Paronomasi*, 122. Van Leeuwen in correspondence has also suggested that 10:11, 12 be considered a pair with a thematic chiasm: A:+ B:- B:- A:+. This may indicate that the two strings are chained together.

Translation emphasizing features of cohesion:

10:12 *Hatred* stirs up dissension,
      Love *covers* all *wrongs.*

Speech Pair
  10:13 *Wisdom* is found on the *lips of the discerning,*
      but a rod is for the *back of him who lacks judgment*
  10:14 *Wise* men store up knowledge,
      but the *mouth of a fool* invites *ruin.*

Wealth Pair
  10:15 The *wealth* of the *rich* is their fortified city,
      but poverty is the *ruin* of the poor.
  10:16 The *wages* of the righteous bring them *to life*
      but the *income* of the wicked brings them punishment.

Hinge
  10:17 He who heeds discipline shows the way *to life*
      but whoever ignores correction leads others astray.

Speech Pair
  10:18 He who *covers* his *hatred* has lying *lips,*
      and whoever spreads slander is a fool.
  10:19   When words are many, *wrong* is not absent,
      but he who holds his *lips* is wise.

Wealth & Speech Concluding Pair
  10:20 The *tongue* of the righteous is choice silver,
      but the heart of the wicked is of little value.
  10:21 The *lips* of the righteous nourish many.
      but fools die for *lack of judgment.*

STRING #3: Prov 10:12–21

The repetition of "hatred" and also the root כסה in 10:12 and 18 suggests a bond with the 10:18–19 pair. This is strengthened by the repetition of "wrong" in Prov 10:12 and 10:19. This enveloping effect is furthered by "lacks judgment" in Prov 10:13 and 10:21. Similarly, Prov 10:13 and 10:18, 19, 21 all contain a common reference to "lips." Notice that the NIV translates שְׂפָתָיו "his tongue" in 10:19, thus biasing the translation in the direction of divergence, rather than translating it

consistently "lips" (cf. also פָּשַׁע/פְּשָׁעִים ["wrong"/"sin" NIV] in 10:12, 19 and תְּכַסֶּה/יְכַסֶּה ["overwhelms"/ "covers" NIV] in 10:11, 12). Thus the cohesive collectional features are further obfuscated by translation.

Prov 10:13 and 10:14 are a proverbial pair. They are linked by the repetition of the חכם root. In the 10:13–14 pair, as in 10:2–3, there is a similar semantic shift of an abstract quality ("righteousness" [10:2]/ "wisdom" [10:13]) to concrete persons manifesting those qualities ("righteous" [10:3]/"wise men" [10:14]). The repetition of this חכם root ties the subject of 10:13a to the subject of 10:14a. Both first stichs disclose the activity of the wise followed by forecasts of the destructive results of the fool's actions. The speech topic ("lips"/"mouth" + Character Quality ["discerning"/"fool"]) envelops the pair head to tail (10:13a, 14b).[14] The 10:13–14 pair is linked to the 10:15–16 pair by the catchword "ruin" and a possible play on "hiding" or "treasuring." Perhaps a concatenous chaining relationship may best explain the sequencing here.[15]

Prov 10:15 begins another clear proverb pair which is united by the theme of wealth. Boström correctly observes the sound echo in the repetition of קר in 10:14b (קִרְבָה) and 10:15a (קִרְיַת).[16] The disparate themes of speech in 10:13–14 and wealth in 10:15–16 separate them into two distinct pairs.

Prov 10:15–16 is a good example of a non-catchword proverbial pair. Lexically, not a single word is repeated in this pair. This divergence is heightened by the presence of high frequency words "righteous"/"wicked" and many economic terms which could easily have led to repetition.[17]

Syntactically, all four stichs of 10:15 and 16 are verbless clauses. In v 15 the "Possessors" are characterized by their economic status ("rich"/"poor"), while in v 16 the "Possessors" are characterized by their moral character ("righteous"/"wicked").

Thematically, 10:15 and 16 are clearly economic in nature. In both sayings a positive evaluation of wealth is followed by a negative. V 15 comments on the inherent benefits of wealth and on the plight of the poor. Lest one value economic matters too highly, v 16 is juxtaposed to bring wealth back into the realm of morality.

[14]Syntactically both proverbs begin with a three constituent transitive clause followed by a verbless clause (2 constituents, 4 units). O'Connor, *Hebrew Verse Structure* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1980) 122, 138.

[15]Shalom Paul, "Amos 1:3–2:3: A Concatenous Literary Pattern," *JBL* 90 (1971) 402–3. Suggested by R. Van Leeuwen in correspondence (Nov. 7, 1988).

[16]Boström, *Paronomasi*, 123–24.

[17]Hildebrandt, "Proverbial Pairs," 214–15.

A significant catchword occurs in 10:17, as Murphy well notes.[18] Clearly one of the syntactic structures which welds 10:16 together is the prepositional phrase featuring לֹ + Noun of life/destruction. When 10:17 picks up this exact prepositional phrase, surely it is not mere coincidence. Is this pair, then, really a triad? Thematically 10:15–16 and 17 are distinct. V 17 moves away from economics and employs traditional instruction vocabulary regarding the benefits of heeding discipline and the liabilities of forsaking correction. The lone instructional proverb in 10:17 appears to facilitate a transition back to the theme of speech in 10:18–21. As Prov 10:15 is linked to 10:14 via a catchword, so Prov 10:16 is linked to 10:17 by an explicit repetition of "to life." Prov 10:17 marks the mid-point of this string (10:12–21).

Prov 10:18 reopens the proverbs on speech (cf. 10:13–14). This proverb exhibits what Akhmanova has called a phonestheme: "a recurrent combination of sound which is similar to the morpheme in the sense that a certain content or meaning is more or less clearly associated with it."[19] Phonetically, sibilants predominate, being repeated six times through various letters (ס, שׁ, שׂ, ץ) thrice in initial positions. So sibilant sound is used to reinforce the message—allowing the audience to hear the hissing of the slanderer spreading his secrets.

In the 10:18–19 pair a semantic chiasm is observed:

10:18a	Hidden hatred	(A)	
10:18b	Spread Slander		(B)
10:19a	Many words		(B)
10:19b	Few words	(A)	

This is a complementary pair: one who holds his tongue is wise (10:19) except if it is for the purpose of deceptively covering hatred (cf. Prov 26:4–5). There may be a twofold sound link within the pair: (1) דב in word initial positions; and (2) trailing לי, in final position. כס which heads 10:20 was also twice repeated in 10:18, once in initial position.

A final proverb pair (10:20–21) closes this string. The theme of the inherent value of righteous speech is made concrete by the observation that righteous lips feed many. The repetition and position of "righteous" + "Mouth part" and "heart" link the two proverbs into a pair. Boström notes the sound echo in נִבְחָר (10:20a) and חֲסַר (10:21b).[20] As
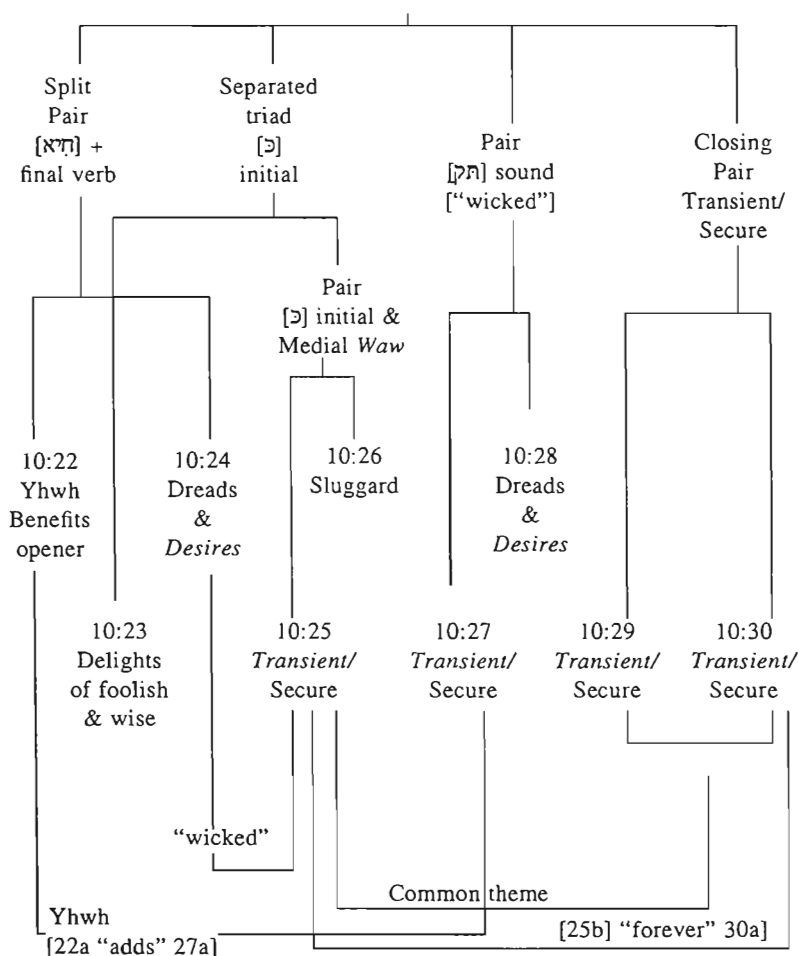
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[18]R. Murphy, *Wisdom Literature*, 64ff.

[19]Olga Akhmanova, *Linguostylistics: Theory and Method* (The Hague: Mouton, 1976) 23, 123, 125. E.g., "sl"-words: slither, slip, slimy, slide, slosh, sluggish, etc.).

[20]Boström, *Paronomasi*, 125.

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the final pair 10:10-11 concluded the second string by drawing strands of the previous pairs together (10:6-11) so, too, Prov 10:20-21 weaves together the two imbricating themes of this third string (speech [10:13-14; 10:18-19] and wealth [10:15-16] into a single concluding pair (10:20-21). The thematic shift between 10:21 and the Yahweh proverb in 10:22 indicates that a new string begins in 10:22, as outlined in the chart below.

Translation emphasizing features of cohesion:

STRING #4
Proverbs 10:22–10:30

| Split Pair [וְהִיא] + final verb | Separated triad [כ] initial | Pair [תק] sound ["wicked"] | Closing Pair Transient/ Secure |

Pair [כ] initial & Medial *Waw*

| 10:22 Yhwh Benefits opener | 10:24 Dreads & *Desires* | 10:26 Sluggard | 10:28 Dreads & *Desires* | |

| 10:23 Delights of foolish & wise | 10:25 *Transient/* Secure | 10:27 *Transient/* Secure | 10:29 *Transient/* Secure | 10:30 *Transient/* Secure |

"wicked"

Common theme

Yhwh
[22a "adds" 27a]   [25b] "forever" 30a]

Translation emphasizing features of cohesion:

10:22   The blessing of the LORD *she* brings wealth,
and he *adds* no trouble to it.

10:23   *Like* laughter *to a fool* is one doing wickedness
so is wisdom *to a man of understanding*.

10:24   The dreads of the *wicked she* overtakes him;
what the *righteous* desire will be granted.

10:25   *Like* a storm that blows by, *so* the *wicked* are gone,
but the *righteous* stand firm forever.

10:26   *Like* vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes,
so is a sluggard *to those who send him*.

10:27   The fear of the LORD *adds* length to life,
but the *years of the wicked* are cut short.

10:28   The prospect of the righteous is joy,
but the *hopes of the wicked* come to nothing.

Transient/Security Theme bound Pair

10:29   The way of the LORD is a refuge for the innocent
but it is the ruin of those who do evil.

10:30   The righteous will never be uprooted,
but the wicked will not remain in the land.

STRING #4: Prov 10:22–30

This fourth nine-verse string features an oscillating theme of transience and security (10:22–30). The difference in theme and the lack of lexical or phonetic links with the preceding verses call for a break between 10:21 and 22. Prov 10:22 (cf. 10:6) begins with "blessing." The topically significant word "brings wealth" is also found in 10:4 and the wealth theme in 10:2–5 and 10:15–16. The initial לֹא + Hiphil verb (10:22b) is reminiscent of 10:2–3. Thus 10:22 makes a nice opener linking back to previous strings (10:1–5; 10:12–21).

The rare presence and medial first stich location of the feminine pronoun הִיא strongly points 10:22a down to 10:24a. Notice too the isomorphic syntactic structure of 10:22a and 24a (Subject:NP ["blessing of YHWH"/"dread of the wicked"] + Pronoun [3fs] + Verb ["brings wealth"/"overtakes"]). Prov 10:22 also makes a good structural divider because of its unique use of the divine name and non-antithetical parallelism.

Prov 10:23, linked via the initial כ is an example of a "separated triad" phenomena (10:23 and 25–26; cf. 15:1–2 and 4; 8–9 and 11;

20:16–17 and 20, 29–30 and 27). The bond with 10:26 is furthered by
the ל + Noun which immediately follows the opening prepositional
phrase. Prov 10:23 and 10:26 both close with final ל prepositional
phrases. Once again the NIV violates these cohesive elements in trans-
lating 10:23.

Prov 10:24 is thematically diverse from 10:23. Prov 10:24 links to
10:22 through the rare first stich medial 3fs pronoun (הִיא) + verb
sequence. Prov 10:22 and 10:24 appear to be a split pair (cf. 16:32/ 17:1;
17:26/ 18:5; and 18:23/ 19:1) with the separating verse 10:23 itself being
linked downward in a "separated triad" scheme (10:23 and 25–26). The
repetition of the "wicked" and "righteous" in 10:24 and 25 connects
these two proverbs so 10:24 is not stranded.

With v 25 a clear proverb pair begins (10:25–26), linked not only
by the initial כ and simile rhetorical device, but also by the first stich-
medial *waw*—which is rare in these proverbs. The initial כ link should
also be tied back to the detached 10:23.

Skehan and Brown err here as they call for a major division
between 10:25 and 26 using a mechanical 25-verse division basis.[21]
Another indicator that a division should not come between 10:25 and
the following proverbs is the close thematic link with Prov 10:29–30
concerning the transience of the wicked and the permanence of those
having integrity. The shared "forever" (10:25, 30) also ties 10:25 into
what follows. Further, thematic connections may also be seen in com-
paring 10:27 to 22 (Yahweh's benefits) and 10:28 to 24 (desires/ dreads).
Note the detached pair (10:22, 24) is brought together in 10:27–28. The
sluggard motif (10:26) is not found elsewhere in this string (cf. 10:4–5).

Prov 10:27–28 is a loose pair. Boström highlights the שׁנ sequence
as a sound link between 10:26 and 27 (שְׁנַיִם; עָצֵל; שְׁנוֹת).[22] This pair
obviously echoes the initial verse of this string (10:22)—both in the
presence of the divine name and in the use of shared verb "adds."

Prov 10:27–28 are connected in three ways: (1) the repetition of
the catchword "wicked" in the initial Subject:Noun Phrases of the
second stichs; (2) the תק phonetic sequence in the second stich; and (3)
syntactically 10:27b and 28b are isomorphic (Subject: NP + Verb:
intransitive). Thematically, the desires/dreads of contrasting groups
("wicked"/"righteous") ties back to 10:24, which is a further discon-
firmation of Skehan's sectional division at 10:25. While 10:27 and 28
share phonetic, lexical and syntactic features, they are thematically
diverse.

The lack of thematic linking is made up for in the next proverbial
pair (10:29–30), where both verses elaborate on the security/ transience

[21]Brown, "Structured Parallelism," 9. P. Skehan, "A Single Editor," 25.
[22]Boström, *Paronomasi*, 125.

of those having "integrity" [NIV:righteous]/"evil." This theme is con-
solidated from 10:25 and 10:27. The use of the divine name ties 10:29 to
the preceding pair (10:27-28, cf. 10:22). "Ruin" reminds one of the
10:14-15 pair.

How does the section which began in 10:22 end? The section closes
with a proverb pair (10:29-30) that draws together the theme of
transience/security which has oscillated throughout this string (10:25,
27, 29-30).

Because of the lack of connection to the preceding string (10:22-
30), and the catchword ties downward with 11:1 (רְצוֹנוֹ), 10:31-32 is
best constructed as beginning a new string.

CONCLUSION ON COHESION: PROVERBIAL STRINGS

It has been demonstrated that Prov 10:1-30 is composed of four
proverbial strings (10:1-5; 10:6-11; 10:12-21; and 10:22-30). The **first
string** (10:1-5) is divided into an opening, hinge proverb (10:1), two
pairs on the topic of wealth (10:2-3, 4-5). The **second string** is com-
posed of three pairs (10:6-7, 8-9, 10-11) that are structured by envelop-
ing, whole-stich repetitions (10:6b/11b; 10:8b/10b) with the final pair
(10:10-11) drawing together and closing the string. The **third string**
(10:12-21) opens with a lone proverb hinge (10:12), followed by a pair
about proper speech (10:13-14) concatenated with a pair on wealth
(10:15-16). These two pairs are followed by a single proverb (10:17)
which marks the middle of the string. The next pair (10:18-19) returns
to the theme of speech and the section concludes with a pair drawing
together the imbricating wealth and speech motifs (10:20-21). The
fourth string (10:22-30) begins with a split pair (10:22, 24) followed by
a separated triad (10:23, 25-26). The final two pairs (10:27-28; 29-30)
highlight the themes of transience and security.

This paper has sought to explore the potentials of collectional
analysis of the proverbial sentences which has led to the discovery of
four proverbial strings in Proverbs 10. In order to appreciate the
significance of each individual gem, the entire necklace must be viewed.
As a necklace is more than a string of stones, so, too, the proverbial
sentences need to be examined on the level of the collection as well as
the sentential level. The discovery of cohesive "proverbial strings" in
Proverbs 10 heightens our appreciation for the artistry of the canonical
collectors.

Perhaps the collector(s), by the quick shifts of topic, is presenting
the student with a picture of empirical reality.[23] This study suggests

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[23] J. Williams, *For Those Who Ponder Proverbs* (Sheffield: Almond, 1981) 70, 82.
He writes, "aphoristic thought does not proceed systematically, but empirically. It
directs itself to the fragments of experience as they occur, so that the mind is compelled
to make its own connections among phenomena."

that rather than being distant to modern culture, this collection of proverbs is actually quite at home with the diversities of modern society, characterized by seeming fragmented commercials and instantaneous video switches of projected reality. Proverbs calls those seeking order, meaning and wholeness to its sayings leading those listening through the isolation, fragmentation and confusion of empirical reality to the crafted integration and wholeness of the fear of Yahweh.[24]

[24]Wolfgang Mieder and Barbara Mieder, "Tradition and Innovation: Proverbs in Advertising," in *The Wisdom of Many: Essays on the Proverbs* (NY: Garland, 1981) 309-22. This is an excellent article on the modern use of proverbs.