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# Vetus Testamentum

## The Path Metaphor and the Construction of a Schicksalwirkende Tatsphäre in Proverbs 10:1-22:16 --Manuscript Draft--

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<b>Corresponding Author:</b>	Suzanna Ruth Millar University of Cambridge Cambridge, UNITED KINGDOM
<b>Corresponding Author's Institution:</b>	University of Cambridge
<b>First Author:</b>	Suzanna Ruth Millar
<b>Order of Authors:</b>	Suzanna Ruth Millar
<b>Abstract:</b>	Klaus Koch influentially argued that in Proverbs, the world is understood as a schicksalwirkende Tatsphäre - a sphere of activity effecting one's fate. Act and consequence are intrinsically and organically bound together. Recent scholarship has cast doubt on these views. Some of Proverbs' imagery, however, does seem to suggest such an act-consequence connection. The 'path', for example, is at once moral and salvific, or immoral and destructive. I suggest that through imagery of the path, the sage constructs a metaphorical schicksalwirkende Tatsphäre. It is not intended as an explanation of causality, but as a motivational model to affect the student's behaviour.
<b>Keywords:</b>	act-consequence connection; path; schicksalwirkende Tatsphäre; pedagogy; imagery; Proverbs 10:1-22:16
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**The Path Metaphor and the Construction of a *Schicksalwirkende Tatsphäre* in****Proverbs 10:1-22:16**

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7 *Abstract:* Klaus Koch influentially argued that in Proverbs, the world is understood as a  
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9 *schicksalwirkende Tatsphäre* – a sphere of activity effecting one’s fate. Act and consequence are  
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11 intrinsically and organically bound together. Recent scholarship has cast doubt on these views.  
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15 connection. The ‘path’, for example, is at once moral and salvific, or immoral and destructive.  
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17 I suggest that through imagery of the path, the sage constructs a metaphorical *schicksalwirkende*  
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19 *Tatsphäre*. It is not intended as an explanation of causality, but as a motivational model to  
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21 affect the student’s behaviour.  
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29 *Key words:* act-consequence connection – path – *schicksalwirkende Tatsphäre* – pedagogy –  
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31 imagery – Proverbs 10:1-22:16  
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**Introduction*****The schicksalwirkende Tatsphäre***

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48 In 1955, Klaus Koch famously asked ‘*Gibt es ein Vergeltungsdogma im Alten Testament?*’ – ‘Is there  
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50 a doctrine of retribution in the Old Testament?’<sup>1</sup> Arguing particularly from the book of  
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52 Proverbs, he answered with an emphatic negative: ‘retribution’ is a superimposed Western  
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<sup>1</sup> K. Koch, “Gibt es ein Vergeltungsdogma im Alten Testament”, *ZTK* 52 (1955), pp. 1-42; published in English  
as K. Koch, “Is There a Doctrine of Retribution in the Old Testament” in J. Crenshaw (ed.), *Theodicy in the Old*  
*Testament* (London, 1972), pp. 57-87.

1 theological category. In Hebrew thought, he suggested, no judicial intervention is needed (or  
2 indeed possible) between deed and outcome. The two are not separable, but are internally and  
3 necessarily bound together as an ‘act-consequence connection’ (*Tun-Ergehen Zusammenhang*).  
4 The latter grows organically from the former, like a plant from a seed. Accordingly, every  
5 deed is *schicksalwirkende* – ‘fate-effecting’. It has its consequence built into it, such that it is  
6 almost nonsensical to separate the two. A person’s whole life, their whole ‘sphere of activity’,  
7 is characterised by this intrinsic causality. It is, in short, a *schicksalwirkende Tatsphäre*.  
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16 Drawing on Scandinavian scholars like J. Pedersen and K. Fahlgren,<sup>2</sup> Koch argued  
17 that such holistic thinking characterised the Hebrew mindset. Israelites had a ‘synthetic view  
18 of life’,<sup>3</sup> seeing the world as a totality, devoid of the compartmentalizing divisions that  
19 characterize the modern Western outlook, such as the division between act and consequence.  
20 This, it was argued, is evidenced in the Hebrew language. Many Hebrew roots can be used to  
21 describe both an ‘act’ (in our mode of thought), and its ‘consequence’.<sup>4</sup> So **נָסָא** can sometimes  
22 mean ‘wrongdoing’ (*Missetat*) and sometimes ‘guilt’ or ‘punishment’ (*Schuld/Strafe*).<sup>5</sup> **עָרַב** can  
23 mean ‘moral evil’ (*Bosheit*) and ‘misfortune’ (*Unglück*).<sup>6</sup> The same word describes both,  
24 therefore “Ursache und Wirkung sind... für den Israelite ein und dasselbe”.<sup>7</sup>  
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45 <sup>2</sup> J. Pedersen, *Israel: Its Life and Culture*, (Copenhagen, 1926). K. Hj. Fahlgren, “Die Gegensätze von Sedaqa im  
46 Alten Testament”, in K. Koch (ed.), *Um das Prinzip der Vergeltung in Religion und Recht des Alten Testaments*  
47 (Darmstadt, 1972), pp. 87-129.  
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50 <sup>3</sup> Fahlgren, ‘*synthetische Lebensauffassung*’ pp. 126-129.  
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52 <sup>4</sup> Fahlgren. Koch, 1972, pp. 75-78, explicitly draws on Fahlgren.  
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54 <sup>5</sup> Fahlgren, p. 112.  
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56 <sup>6</sup> Fahlgren, p. 122.  
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58 <sup>7</sup> Fahlgren, p. 90.  
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1 Koch's theory has been very influential,<sup>8</sup> but few scholars accept it wholesale, and a  
2 number of criticisms may be raised. First, Koch's analysis can only account for a small  
3 amount of the biblical data. The *schicksalwirkende Tatsphäre* is most evident in Proverbs, but  
4 even there, some verses do not fit with Koch's analysis. These he conveniently ignores.<sup>9</sup> In  
5 particular, Yahweh and society seem to play a much more active role in enforcing  
6 consequences than Koch would allow.<sup>10</sup> Second, the anthropological suppositions behind the  
7 theory are dubious. The idea of 'synthetic view of life' was based on notions of the 'primitive'  
8 mind, which was always orientated towards grasping the totality.<sup>11</sup> Such psychological  
9 speculations have largely fallen out of scholarship.

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21 Third, Koch's linguistic arguments for the unity of act and consequence are unsound.  
22 Hebrew may have one word (e.g. רָע) where others have two (e.g. 'evil' and 'misfortune'), but  
23 this does not mean that the Hebrew speaker understood no distinctions between different  
24 meanings. Linguistic structure cannot be directly mapped onto thought structure.<sup>12</sup> In English,  
25 we say only 'to know' where French has 'savoir' and 'connaître', German 'wissen' and  
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36 <sup>8</sup> The most positive and sensitive recent appraisal of Koch's views probably comes from J. Barton, *Ethics in*  
37 *Ancient Israel* (Oxford, 2014), esp. pp. 211-226.

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40 <sup>9</sup> Koch makes no mention of the Yahweh cluster in Prov 16:1-9, for example. On the proverbs he omits in chs.  
41 10-13, see P. Hatton, *Contradiction in the Book of Proverbs: The Deep Waters of Counsel* (SOTS Monograph Series;  
42 Hampshire, 2008), pp. 83-116.

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46 <sup>10</sup> The role of Yahweh has been examined by many scholars. See especially L. Boström, *The God of the Sages: The*  
47 *Portrayal of God in the Book of Proverbs* (Coniectanea Biblica Old Testament Series 29; Stockholm, 1990). On the  
48 role of society, see B. Janowski, "Die Tat Kehrt Zum Täter Zurück: Offene Fragen im Umkreis des 'Tun-  
49 *Ergehen-Zusammenhang'*", *ZTK* 91 (1994), pp. 247-271.

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57 <sup>11</sup> E.g. A. R. Johnson, *The Vitality of the Individual in the Thought of Ancient Israel* (2<sup>nd</sup> edn.; Cardiff, 1964). For  
58 Johnson, totality thinking "is the 'Open Sesame' which unlocks the secrets of the Hebrew language and reveals  
59 the riches of the Israelite mind" p. 2.

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65 <sup>12</sup> J. Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (Oxford, 1961), pp. 33-45.

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‘kennen’. Is it therefore impossible for us to understand the distinction between ‘knowing’ a person and ‘knowing’ facts? If I know the native English speaker, I know this is not the case. The linguistic phenomenon cannot in itself tell us about any metaphysical connection.

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That said, however, the data Koch described are real enough, and deserve consideration. There are many sayings in Proverbs which do present the connection between act and consequence in apparently automatic terms. Many acts do seem ‘fate-effecting’. This is often the case, for example, in proverbs describing ‘the path’. This metaphor at once depicts the behaviour of an individual, and the consequences that come to him. The moral rectitude of traveller’s course is intrinsically bound together with favourability of his experiences along the way. I suggest that, instead of presupposing a *schicksalwirkende Tatsphäre*, these proverbs actively create one. They construct a metaphorical world where deeds and consequences correspond. Their purpose is not primarily for an explanation of ontology, but for motivation and rhetoric.

Viewing the *schicksalwirkende Tatsphäre* in this way avoids the three problems highlighted above. (1) It is not the only conceivable framework for the sages, but one model among many, constructed for rhetorical purpose. (2) It is not a presupposition of the ‘primitive mind’, but a skilful creation. (3) It does not seek a worldview in language structure and lexical stocks, but considers how words are deployed in context. As we explore the nuances of the metaphor, its fate-effecting nature will become evident.

### ***The ‘Path’ Metaphor***

The metaphor of a ‘path’ to depict life is frequently encountered across the Hebrew Bible; the Psalms, prophets, and Deuteronomy all making extensive use of the imagery.<sup>13</sup> Proverbs too

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<sup>13</sup> For the most extensive discussion of the metaphor in the HB, see M. P. Zehnder, *Wegmetaphorik im Alten Testament: Eine Semantische Untersuchung der alttestamentlichen und altorientalischen Weg-Lexeme mit besonderer*

1 employs it often, both in the instructions (chs. 1-9), and the sayings collections (chs. 10-29).  
2 My specific focus will be on the first sayings collection (10:1-22:16), where it seems to make a  
3 distinctive contribution.<sup>14</sup>  
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7 Proverbs lacks covenantal and salvation-historical themes in general, and these are  
8 equally absent from its path imagery. Unlike elsewhere, no link is made with walking with or  
9 before God in the Exodus.<sup>15</sup> The path is not explicitly linked with God's *Torah*,<sup>16</sup> and straying  
10 does not obviously imply following idols. Indeed, God's explicit role is minimal. Though he is  
11 more prevalent in chs. 1-9, the sayings only allude to him three times in connection with the  
12 path (10:29; 16:9; 20:24). Scholarly attention has been focussed on the image of the 'two  
13 paths' in Proverbs, traversed by diametrically opposed character types.<sup>17</sup> The path of the  
14 righteous stands apart from the path of the wicked, the gap between them unbreachable.  
15 While this impression is pervasive, there are variations in the imagery,<sup>18</sup> and other themes are  
16 sometimes central. In particular, I would like to comment on how Proverbs creates a  
17 *schicksalwirkende Tatsphäre* through its path imagery.  
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33 *Berücksichtigung ihrer metaphorischen Verwendung* (BZAW 268; Berlin, 1999). For a historical survey of roads in  
34 ancient Israel, see D. A. Dorsey, *The Roads and Highways of Ancient Israel* (The Asor Library of Biblical and Near  
35 Eastern Archaeology; Baltimore, 1991).

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14 For discussions of the path metaphor in chs. 1-9, see N. C. Habel, "The Symbolism of Wisdom in Proverbs 1-9", *Interpretation* 26.2 (1972), pp. 131-157; S. Weeks, *Instruction and Imagery in Proverbs 1-9* (Oxford, 2007), esp. pp. 73-79; 148-154.

15 A. Gros, *Je Suis La Route* (Thèmes Bibliques; Paris, 1961); O. Lund, *Way Metaphors and Way Topics in Isaiah 40-55* (Forschungen zum Alten Testament 2.28; Tübingen, 2007).

16 W. P. Brown, *Seeing the Psalms: A Theology of Metaphor* (Louisville, 2002), pp. 31-54. However, Weeks (pp. 148-154) has suggested that these implications would have been evident for the post-exilic Jewish readers of Proverbs 1-9.

17 Habel; D. P. Bricker, "The Doctrine of the 'Two Ways' in Proverbs", *JETS* 38.4 (1995) pp. 501-517.

18 Fox distinguishes between two underlying metaphors: 'two paths' and 'many paths'. M. V. Fox, *Proverbs 1-9: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (Anchor Bible; New York, 2000), pp. 129-131.

1 The prevalence of the path metaphor in the literature may be because of its distinctive  
2 status in thought and language. Linguists have described ‘life is a path’ as a basic conceptual  
3 metaphor.<sup>19</sup> Conceptual metaphors are not mere poetic embellishment, but tools for  
4 understanding, to help structure thought. We take something difficult to understand, like life  
5 itself, and view it through the metaphor of something simpler, like a path. Through frequent  
6 use, the metaphor becomes conventionalised in language, comprehensible and accessible to  
7 all. This makes it particularly useful for short texts like proverbs, as it does not need lengthy  
8 explanation. The metaphor gives a basic conceptual structure, but is not absolutely rigid,  
9 allowing for flexibility, inconsistencies, and imaginative reconstructions.<sup>20</sup>

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21 When we employ the metaphor, features from the ‘source domain’ (the path) are  
22 mapped onto the ‘target domain’ (life). Not just one image is relevant here, but a whole ‘image  
23 schema’. Thus, ‘conduct in life is motion along a path’; ‘dangerous situations in life are  
24 hazards on a path’; ‘advice about life is guidance along a path’.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, properties,  
25 relations, inferences, and patterns of reasoning may be mapped from one domain to the  
26 other. The way we conceptualise life is restructured by our knowledge of paths. Indeed, the  
27 mapping allows us “to impart... structure which is not there independent of the metaphor”.<sup>22</sup>  
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38 In particular, as I will show, certain features of the path are fate-effecting. Acts intrinsically  
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<sup>19</sup> For a classic work on ‘Conceptual Metaphor Theory’ discussing the ‘life is a path’ metaphor, see G. Lakoff and M. Turner, *More Than Cool Reason: A Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor* (Chicago, 1989). For applications of this theory to the ‘path’ in the HB, see A. Basson, “The Path Image Schema as Underlying Structure for the Metaphor ‘Moral Life is Journey’ in Psalm 25”, *OTE* 24.1 (2011) pp.19-29; O. Jäkel, “How Can Moral Man Understand The Road He Travels? Prospects and Problems of the Cognitive Approach to Religious Metaphor”, in K. Feysaerts (ed.), *The Bible Through Metaphor and Translation: A Cognitive Semantics Perspective* (Bern, 2003), pp. 55-86.

<sup>20</sup> The flexibility of the metaphor is particularly stressed by J. Lam, *Patterns of Sin in the Hebrew Bible: Metaphor, Culture, and the Making of a Religious Concept* (Oxford, 2015), pp. 164-165.

<sup>21</sup> For a fuller elaboration of the path image schema in HB, see Jäkel.

<sup>22</sup> Lakoff and Turner, p. 64.



1 lead to their consequences. The proverbs take this connection from the source world, and ask  
2 their readers to map it onto the target world of their own lives. This is a clever rhetorical  
3 strategy, encouraging the readers of the truth and obviousness of the connection, and  
4 persuading them to act accordingly.  
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9 Scholars often note the act-consequence connection in relation to the path  
10 metaphor.<sup>23</sup> The moral path is also salvific, the immoral one also destructive. However, few  
11 have explored the nuances of the imagery, nor delineated which particular features are fate-  
12 effecting. The rhetorical and motivational value of this connection has not been sufficiently  
13 analysed. To do so is my intention here. I hope to rehabilitate the *schicksalwirkende Tatsphäre*  
14 somewhat, not primarily as an ontological explanation of causality, but as a constructed  
15 metaphorical world, to fuel the reader's imagination and provide a motivational model.  
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### 33 **Fate-Effecting Deeds Along the Path**

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38 Many of the sayings in Prov 10:1-22:16 sketch tracks and vistas for their readers to explore  
39 imaginatively. The 'path' at once depicts the ethical course of its travellers and the quality of  
40 the journey, both acts and consequences. Often, subtle grammatical and semantic ambiguities  
41 bind the two still closer. In the world imagined, various different actions prove  
42 *schicksalwirkende*, 'fate-effecting'. Here, I will examine a number of these, and the rhetorical  
43 effect they have in Proverbs.  
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59 <sup>23</sup> e.g. Brown, pp. 36-39; Koch, 1983, pp. 135, 165; Zehnder, pp. 588-593.  
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***Turning from evil***

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3 16:17 מְסִלַּת יִשְׂרָאֵל סוֹר מִרָע שׁוֹמֵר נַפְשׁוֹ נֹצֵר דְּרָכּוֹ:

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5 *The highway of the upright turns from evil; he who watches over his path preserves his life.*

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10 The first colon transports us to a highway traversed by upright men. Its course depicts their  
11 conduct, turning from evil (סוֹר מִרָע). The use of the infinitive construct, סוֹר, means that the  
12 path or the travellers could be ‘turning’. In the latter case, individual agency is stressed. The  
13 upright lead sensitive ethical lives, ready to divert their course when it tends towards  
14 wrongdoing (cf. Prov 3:7; 4:27; 13:19; 14:16; 16:6). Simultaneously, the path turns from its  
15 trajectory to tragedy, for סוֹר מִרָע becomes a fate-effecting deed. The polysemy of רָע is  
16 activated, shifting from ‘moral evil’ to ‘disaster’. Elsewhere, travellers turn (סוֹר) from Sheol  
17 (15:24), and the ‘snares of death’ (13:14; 14:27). Here, the misfortune is simply an ‘evil’ (רָע).  
18 An undisclosed calamity lurks ominously before the readers, motivating them to change their  
19 course.  
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35 It may be significant that this road is a מְסִלָּה ‘highway’. This appears to have been a  
36 carefully prepared or constructed road (Isa 40:3; 49:11; 62:10).<sup>24</sup> W. Tidwell suggests that it  
37 was broad, clearly delimited, and easily passible. Well-kept and possibly surfaced, the traveller  
38 stumbles over no rocks nor slips in any mud.<sup>25</sup> It is precisely the type of road whose travellers  
39 ‘avoid harm’ – סוֹר מִרָע.  
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<sup>24</sup> There has been dispute about the precise designation of this term. Dorsey (pp. 228-233) believes it to be a major public thoroughfare: a main regional road, national highway, or international thoroughfare. This remains the standard explanation of the term. Tidwell disputes this for the biblical period, suggesting instead that it is an approach road to a city. The differences are not essential for the interpretation of this proverb. N. L. Tidwell, “No Highway! The Outline of a Semantic Description of *Mesillāʾ*”, *VT* 45 (1995) pp.251-269.

<sup>25</sup> Tidwell, pp. 266, 269

1 The second colon pleases the ear with its tight internal parallelism, שָׁמַר נַפְשׁוֹ  
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 3 ('preserves his life') closely mirroring its partner נִצֵּר דְרָכּוֹ ('watches his way'), phonologically  
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 5 and morphologically.<sup>26</sup> As I have translated them, the first refers to a consequence, and the  
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 7 second to an act. It is ambiguous which is subject and which predicate, suggesting the mutual  
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 9 entailment of act and consequence. However, the semantics may be still more complex, each  
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 11 phrase intertwining act and consequence within itself. שָׁמַר נַפְשׁוֹ sometimes means 'preserving  
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 13 one's life' (Prov 13:3; 19:16), but elsewhere refers to 'watching oneself', taking care of ethical  
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 15 behaviour (Deut 4:9,15; 23:11). Similarly, נִצֵּר דְרָכּוֹ may have a double significance. Elsewhere,  
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 17 the son is commended to 'watch over' (נִצֵּר) his heart (Prov 4:23) and his mouth (13:3). Here  
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 19 he must 'watch over his way' to ensure its moral direction. In so doing he will 'protect' (נִצֵּר) it  
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 21 (cf. Prov 2:8; 13:6). Within the world constructed by this imagery, attending to the path is a  
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 23 *schicksalwirkende Tat*, impacting both course and condition, conduct and consequence.  
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 25 Ruminating on the acts and consequences interwoven in this proverb, the reader learns to  
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 27 connect them in their own life, that they might turn their own path from evil.  
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### 41 *Going astray*

42 14:22 הֲלוֹא־יִתְעוּ חֲרָשֵׁי רָע וְחֶסֶד וְאֵמֶת חֲרָשֵׁי טוֹב:

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 45 *Do they not go astray, those who devise evil? But kindness and loyalty – those who devise good.*  
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 49

50 This proverb contrasts two polar character types: the 'devisers of evil' (חֲרָשֵׁי רָע), and the  
 51  
 52 'devisers of good' (חֲרָשֵׁי טוֹב). The former 'go astray' (יִתְעוּ). This may refer to deviating  
 53  
 54 morally, like the Israelites whom Manasseh 'led astray to do evil' (לְעֲשׂוֹת אֶת־הָרָע) 2  
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 60 <sup>26</sup> Cf. the very similar phrase in Prov 13:3a נִצֵּר פִּי שָׁמַר נַפְשׁוֹ  
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1 Kgs 21:9=2 Chro 33:9). This presupposes an ethical norm; probably not here the covenantal  
2 law as elsewhere in HB, but the teacher's commandment, societal values, or an inbuilt moral  
3 plumb-line. תעה can also suggest 'to stagger about', as though inebriated.<sup>27</sup> These apparent  
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6  
7 'artisans' (חֲרָשִׁי) of evil have the intellectual clarity of a drunk.  
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9  
10 Furthermore, within the metaphorical framework, 'straying' implies harmful  
11 consequences. It depicts aimless wandering, like animals off course (Ex 23:4; Isa 53:6; Ps  
12 119:176), or desolate, directionless nomads (Gen 21:14). The scorching heat of trackless  
13 wastes (Ps 107:4; Job 12:24) is the inevitable fate of deviants. Within this metaphorical world,  
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18  
19 'straying' is a fate-effecting deed. The connection is deduced by the reader, and motivates  
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21  
22 them against moral error.  
23

24 The second colon connects the 'devisers of good' with 'kindness and loyalty' (תִּקְדּוֹ  
25 וְאֱמֶת), but does not make the relationship clear. It may be taken as a predicate – subject  
26 arrangement: such men *are* benevolence itself.<sup>28</sup> They embody social solidarity in their own  
27 communities. Alternatively, they may *meet* kindness and loyalty.<sup>29</sup> Just as Righteousness (צִדְקָה)  
28 protects the blameless of way (13:6), and Evil (רָעָה) pursues sinners (13:21), these  
29 personifications treat the traveller according to their nature. They may be trustworthy guides,  
30 preventing him from straying, and bestowing goodness upon him. Elsewhere they are God's  
31 heralds on the road (Ps 89:15[14]). A divine sender is not mentioned (though not necessarily  
32 excluded) here. The second colon, then, may refer to acts or consequences. The reader might  
33 discern both and infer a connection between them: those who are kind and loyal will be  
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<sup>27</sup> Isa 19:13f, 21:4, 28:7; Jer 50:6; Job 12:25.

<sup>28</sup> Some translations add a verb 'show kindness and loyalty' (ESV marg., NIV marg.), or translate adjectivally 'are loyal and faithful' (REB)

<sup>29</sup> So many translations; e.g. KJV, RSV, ESV, NIV, NASB, HCSB.

1 Similar double meanings are evident in Prov 10:17. It begins אֶרַח לְחַיִּים שׁוֹמֵר מוֹסֵר ‘A  
 2 path to life – the one who heeds discipline’. As in 14:22b, the relationship between the two  
 3 halves is ambiguous. Taken as predicate – subject, the disciplined one becomes a path to  
 4 guide others (i.e. the colon depicts his acts).<sup>30</sup> Or perhaps he walks the path to life himself  
 5 (consequence).<sup>31</sup> The proverb continues וְעוֹזֵב תּוֹכַחַת מִתְּעָה ‘but the one who rejects reproof  
 6 leads astray’. Being untrained himself, he proves no guide to others, simultaneously leading  
 7 them to misconduct and misfortune. In this metaphorical world, advice about behaviour is  
 8 fate-effecting, not only for others but for yourself, for the guide walks with the travellers.<sup>32</sup>

9  
 10 In 21:16a, אָדָם תּוֹעָה מִדֶּרֶךְ הַשְּׂבִיל ‘a man strays from the way of insight’, i.e. he errs  
 11 from wisdom ethics. Again, the deviation proves *schicksalwirkende*, for בָּקֵהל רַפְּאִים יָנוּחַ ‘he will  
 12 rest in the assembly of the dead’ (21:16b). The path had potential for prosperity (note double  
 13 meaning of שָׁבַל; e.g. Josh 1:8; Prov 17:8); by blinding wandering from its course he has  
 14 ensured his own destruction (cf. Prov 5:5-6; 7:25-27; 9:18).

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30 So NIV.

31 So most translations.

32 It is possible that this is an internal hiphil ‘leads himself astray’. These occur frequently with other verbs of motion. E.g. הִקְרִיב ‘to (cause oneself to) come close’; הִרְחִיק ‘to (cause oneself to) go far away’; הִשִּׁיב ‘to (cause oneself to) return’. Though the passage is difficult, an internal hiphil of תָּעָה may also occur in Jer 42:19b-20a: הִתְעַתְּם בְּנַפְשׁוֹתֵיכֶם: הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה הָיָה הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה (Q; K reads הַתְּעַתְּם) ‘I have warned you this day that you have (cause yourselves to have) gone astray at the cost of your lives.’ If this interpretation is valid, there may be another layer in the act-consequence double meaning here: he leads others astray (causative hiphil; acts) and thereby leads himself astray (internal hiphil; consequences).

### ***Straightening the way***

11:5a צְדָקַת תְּמִים תִּישֶׁר דְּרָכּוֹ

*The righteousness of the blameless straightens his way*

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10 Within this metaphorical framework, the direction of the moral path is variously construed.  
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12 Sometimes it turns from wrongdoing (סוּר מִרַע); here it stays straight. Indeed, by their  
13  
14 righteousness, the blameless intentionally ‘straighten’ (יִשַׁר, piel) it against any foolish  
15  
16 temptations calling them to turn aside (cf. Prov 4:25; 9:15; 15:21). Conduct is יִשָּׁר ‘straight,  
17  
18 right’ if it adheres to ethical norms, set externally and not simply by one’s own subjective  
19  
20 judgment (Prov 12:15; 14:12=16:25; 21:2). Conversely, wicked paths are ‘crooked’ (עִקָּשׁ Prov  
21  
22 2:15; 10:9; 22:5; 28:6,18, הִפְכַּפְּךָ 21:8). Such ideas are so familiar in Hebrew convention that  
23  
24 יִשָּׁר and עִקָּשׁ have been lexicalised to refer to morally upright and twisted men respectively.  
25  
26  
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30  
31 As well as being ‘straight’, a דֶּרֶךְ יִשָּׁר is ‘level’.<sup>33</sup> Piel יִשַׁר may refer to levelling a road:  
32  
33 removing obstacles and stones, smoothing the surface (e.g. Isa 40:3-4; 45:2).<sup>34</sup> Undoubtedly a  
34  
35 laborious process, this metaphor suggests the careful, continuous, wearisome work required  
36  
37 for the ethical life. But it is worth the effort. The path becomes easily traversable, smooth and  
38  
39 gentle, giving no cause for stumbling (Jer 31:9). It is straight and direct, destination in sight (Ps  
40  
41 107:7), and promising a safe passage (Ezra 8:21). In this metaphorical world,  
42  
43 levelling/straightening one’s path is a *schicksalwirkende Tat*, with implications for both deeds  
44  
45 and consequences. The reader is encouraged to deduce this connection, and to map it onto  
46  
47 their own world, that they might be motivated to righteousness.  
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58 <sup>33</sup> Alonso Schökel, L. יִשָּׁר in G. J. Botterweck *et. al* (eds.), *TDOT vol. 6*, (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1990) pp. 465-466.

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60 <sup>34</sup> Dorsey, p. 3.

**Setting traps along the way**

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3 11:5 צְדָקַת תְּמִים תִּישֶׁר דְּרָכּוֹ וּבְרִשְׁעָתוֹ יִפֹּל רָשָׁע:

4  
5 *The righteousness of the blameless straightens his way; but in his wickedness the wicked falls.*

6  
7  
8 11:6 צְדָקַת יְשָׁרִים תַּצִּילֵם וּבְהוֹת בְּגֵדִים יִלְכְּדוּ:

9  
10 *The righteousness of the upright saves them; but in the desire of the treacherous they are captured.*

11  
12  
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14  
15 The wicked man in 11:5, however, cannot hope for such a safe journey, and he falls ‘in his  
16  
17 wickedness’ (בְּרִשְׁעָתוֹ). Wickedness is metaphorically depicted as a hazard, imperiling the  
18  
19 way.<sup>35</sup> Similarly, elsewhere, one falls ‘into evil’ ((נִפֹּל בְּרָעָה), 13:17; 17:20; cf. 14:32; 24:16). Far  
20  
21 from the straight, level path of the blameless, pits (Prov 26:27; 28:10) and snares (13:14; 14:27;  
22  
23 22:5) may lurk around a corner or beneath the uneven surface. Imagining the scene, the  
24  
25 traveler-reader might tangle his feet in a net (Prov 1:17; 29:5), for a striking phonological  
26  
27 similarity sounds in his ear: בְּרִשְׁעָתוֹ (‘in his net’) – בְּרִשְׁעָתוֹ (‘in his wickedness’).<sup>36</sup> Setting  
28  
29 wickedness in his path has become fate-effecting, causing his downfall. Similarly, in the next  
30  
31 proverb (its thematic and lexical pair) the treacherous are captured in their הִנָּה. The meaning  
32  
33 of this term is disputed. It may be a by-form of אִנָּה ‘desire’ (cf. Prov 10:3; Mic 7:3; Ps 52:9[7]),  
34  
35 or an unusual singular form (cf. Job 6:2; 30:13) of הִנָּה ‘disaster’. Possibly, a wordplay is  
36  
37 intended, connecting acts (his wicked desires) and consequences (calamity).  
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58 <sup>35</sup> Alternatively, כִּי may be parsed instrumentally/causally ‘falls because of his wickedness’.

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60 <sup>36</sup> J. S. Kselman, “Ambiguity and Wordplay in Proverbs XI”, *V/T* 52.4 (2002) pp. 545-548.

12:6 דְּבַרֵי רְשָׁעִים אַרְב־דָּם וּפִי יִשְׁרָיִם יַצִּילֵם:

*The words of the wicked are an ambush of blood; but the mouth of the upright will save them.*

12:13 בְּפֶשַׁע שִׁפְתָיִם מִוֶּקֶשׁ רָע וַיֵּצֵא מִצָּרָה צַדִּיק:

*In the transgression of lips is evil man's snare;<sup>37</sup> but the righteous comes out from distress.*

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These two proverbs present very similar images: a trap is set in the first colon; it is evaded in the second. The wickedness of the men is powerfully captured by the imagery. Like bandits and robbers, they set a bloody ambush (אַרְב־דָּם) for their unsuspecting victims (12:6). Like ruthless hunters, they lay out a snare (מוֹקֶשׁ, 12:13).<sup>38</sup> Their means are their words, which in Proverbs have potency over life and death (18:21). Perhaps they aim to catch their prey through slander, false charges, malicious plotting, or bad advice. But to no avail: the upright and righteous will escape (12:6b, 13b).

The second colon may trigger a rereading of the first. Antithetical parallelisms are the norm in this part of the book,<sup>39</sup> and may be found here. The upright are saved in 6b, so the wicked must be harmed in 6a. The righteous man comes out from distress in 13b, so the evil man must enter it in 13a. Interpreted thus, the wicked set an ambush for themselves; the evil man's snare closes upon his own neck. The genitive is reconstrued: the מִוֶּקֶשׁ רָע is not set *by* the evil man, but *for* him. This motif is well-known in Proverbs. Indeed, "he who digs a pit will fall into it" (26:27a; cf. 28:10; 29:5). The sinners of chapter 1 attempt to entice the naïve son to banditry: "Let us lie in wait for blood" (נִאָּרְבָּה לְדָם; Prov 1:11). Little do they know

<sup>37</sup> Or 'an evil snare'.

<sup>38</sup> The precise meaning of this term is disputed. It may designate some sort of clapping device, related to the Syriac root *nqš*. See G. Gerleman, "Contributions to the Old Testament Terminology of the Chase" in *Bulletin de la Société Royale des Lettres de Lund 1945-6 (Årsberättelse 1945-46)* (Lund, 1946), pp. 79-90.

<sup>39</sup> Antithetical parallelisms are particularly prevalent in Prov 10-15.



1 that this blood will be their own (1:18). Strewing the way with traps inevitably effects fate, for  
2 the huntsman himself stumbles into them.  
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9 ***Clearing thorns from the way***

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12 15:19 דֶּרֶךְ עֲצִיל בְּמִשְׁכַּת חֲדָק וְאַרְחַח יִשְׂרָיִם סְלִלָה

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14  
15 *The way of the sluggard is like a hedge of thorns; but the path of the upright is a highway.*  
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19 This proverb graphically contrasts two paths: one overgrown with thorns, grudgingly trudged  
20 by the lazy; the other a highway for the upright. Within this metaphorical world, both  
21 characters may have effected their fate. The sluggard (עֲצִיל) is caricatured and condemned in  
22 Proverbs. Indolent and insolent, his hands refuse to labour (21:25). God forbid he should  
23 venture outside (22:13; 26:13) or even leave his bed (6:9; 26:14). Through lack of labour, his  
24 vineyard is overrun with thistles and nettles (24:31), and here, his path with thorns.<sup>40</sup> This has  
25 direct implications for the quality of the journey. Passing through a thorn hedge is a laborious  
26 and painful process. Your progress is slow, feet get caught, clothing snags; pricks and  
27 scratches draw blood.  
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41 By contrast, the upright man's path has been carefully constructed, and 'cast up' (סָלַל)  
42 as a highway.<sup>41</sup> סְלִלָה is a passive participle, and the agent may be the upright man himself. No  
43 effort is too great in ensuring an ethical course. And the path so prepared rewards its  
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50  
51 <sup>40</sup> מִשְׁבָּה (from שׁוּד, 'to hedge up') is found only here, but related nouns occur: מְסוּבָה (from the by-form מְסוּבָה) in  
52 Mic 7:4 and מִשְׁבָּה (from שָׁכַד) in Isa 5:5. These seem to have a basic sense of 'hedge'. אַרְחָח seems to be a brier,  
53 and only occurs here and in Mic 7:4 (parallel to מְסוּבָה).  
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57 <sup>41</sup> Dorsey (pp. 229-233) has argued that סָלַל refers not to 'casting up', but to 'levelling'. Either way it implies  
58 laborious construction.  
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1 workmen with the promise of peril-free passage (cf. Isa 35:8; 57:14). Attentiveness to your  
2 moral course is a *schicksalwirkende Tat*, determining your experience of the journey. The reader  
3 maps this correspondence onto his own life, motivating him to diligent care of his course.  
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6  
7 Similarly, in Prov 22:5, : צְנִים פְּחִים בְּדֶרֶךְ עֲקָשׁ שׁוֹמֵר נַפְשׁוֹ יִרְחַק מֵהֶם: ‘Thorns, traps, in  
8 the crooked path; he who preserves his life keeps far from them.’ This proverb combines a  
9 number of fate-effecting features we have already encountered. The man in *a* has acted  
10 wrongly: failing to clear thorns;<sup>42</sup> laying down traps; choosing a crooked course.<sup>43</sup> He may  
11 suffer accordingly, stumbling into one of his self-set hazards hidden round a corner. By  
12 contrast, the man in *b* keeps perils far from his path, demonstrating his uprightness and  
13 securing his prosperity. He ‘watches himself’ ethically, and thus ‘preserves his life’ (שׁוֹמֵר נַפְשׁוֹ;  
14 cf. Prov 16:17 above).  
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## 31 Conclusion

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36 In this investigation, I have explored the metaphorical world constructed by the proverbs’  
37 ‘path’ imagery. In this world, a number of features are *schicksalwirkende*, ‘fate-effecting’. If you  
38 turn from evil (סוֹר מֵרַע), or straighten (יִשָּׁר) your way morally, your path will simultaneously  
39 turn from disaster or have a direct and easy course. But if your behaviour strays (תִּעָה) from  
40 ethical norms, you will also wander into hardship. If you set traps for others, or let thorns  
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49 <sup>42</sup> צְנִים is a hapax, and its meaning is disputed. A number of scholars (e.g. Waltke) propose emending to צְמִים  
50 ‘traps’, which occurs with פָּח in Job 18:9. This has some Versional support – while LXX apparently supports MT  
51 with περιβόλοι ‘prickly plants’, Syr (followed by Targ) has *nsb*, ‘net, snare’. For discussion, see B. Waltke, *The Book*  
52 *of Proverbs: Chapters 16-31* (NICOT; Grand Rapids, Mich, 2005) p. 194 n. 8.  
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57 <sup>43</sup> This interprets עֲקָשׁ as an adjective qualifying דֶּרֶךְ. Alternatively it may be a noun in construct: ‘the path of the  
58 crooked man’  
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1 grow over your path, you imperil yourself by them. Your whole ‘sphere of activity’ is  
2 characterised by this act-consequence connection. It is a *schicksalwirkende Tatsphäre*.  
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4  
5 However, contra-Koch, this *Tatsphäre* is not simply presupposed by the sages. Rather,  
6  
7 it is constructed by them as a metaphor. It is not primarily meant as an ontological reflection  
8  
9 of the real world, but it has rhetorical significance. A number of scholars have suggested that  
10  
11 the act-consequence connection in Proverbs is largely a motivational tool.<sup>44</sup> By describing  
12  
13 graphic consequences, the sages can persuade their students to good behaviour. Here, they are  
14  
15 threatened with disaster, barren wastelands, hazardous journeys imperilled with thorns and  
16  
17 traps. Such they might avoid through navigating an ethical course.  
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21 The act-consequence connections are obvious in the metaphorical world. The  
22  
23 students are encouraged to recognise them, and to map them onto the target world of their  
24  
25 own lives, where they may not be quite so evident. By themselves deducing the connection  
26  
27 and the mapping, the students actively engage their minds, and may be convinced by their  
28  
29 own deductions. The connection is made to seem obvious in the target world too. Elsewhere,  
30  
31 Yahweh or society may enforce the consequences, but here no external agent is specified. This  
32  
33 stresses the responsibility of the student. If I have suffered after erring morally, it is I who  
34  
35 have wandered into destructive wastelands. No external agent can be blamed for somehow  
36  
37 causing the connection between ‘straying’ and ‘straying’. Furthermore, the consequence is  
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39 entirely appropriate for the act, and may not be argued against.<sup>45</sup> The *schicksalwirkende*  
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41 *Tatsphäre*, then, is a powerful metaphorical construction, that the student might walk the  
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43 straight and peril-free path ahead.  
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53 <sup>44</sup> E.g. S. L. Adams, *Wisdom in Transition: Act and Consequence in Second Temple Instructions* (JSJSup 125; Leiden,  
54 2008); Boström.

55 <sup>45</sup> J. Barton, “Natural Law and Poetic Justice in the Old Testament”, *JTS* 30.1 (1979) pp.1-14; P. D. Miller Jr., *Sin*  
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*and Judgment in the Prophets: A Stylistic and Theological Analysis* (SBL Monograph Series 27; Chicago, 1982).

**The Path Metaphor and the Construction of a *Schicksalwirkende Tatsphäre* in****Proverbs 10:1-22:16**

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7 *Abstract:* Klaus Koch influentially argued that in Proverbs, the world is understood as a  
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9 *schicksalwirkende Tatsphäre* – a sphere of activity effecting one’s fate. Act and consequence are  
10  
11 intrinsically and organically bound together. Recent scholarship has cast doubt on these views.  
12  
13 Some of Proverbs’ imagery, however, does seem to suggest such an act-consequence  
14  
15 connection. The ‘path’, for example, is at once moral and salvific, or immoral and destructive.  
16  
17 I suggest that through imagery of the path, the sage constructs a metaphorical *schicksalwirkende*  
18  
19 *Tatsphäre*. It is not intended as an explanation of causality, but as a motivational model to  
20  
21 affect the student’s behaviour.  
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28 *Key words:* act-consequence connection – path – *schicksalwirkende Tatsphäre* – pedagogy –  
29  
30 imagery – Proverbs 10:1-22:16  
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**Introduction*****The schicksalwirkende Tatsphäre***

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47 In 1955, Klaus Koch famously asked ‘*Gibt es ein Vergeltungsdogma im Alten Testament?*’ – ‘Is there  
48  
49 a doctrine of retribution in the Old Testament?’<sup>1</sup> Arguing particularly from the book of  
50  
51 Proverbs, he answered with an emphatic negative: ‘retribution’ is a superimposed Western  
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55 <sup>1</sup> K. Koch, “Gibt es ein Vergeltungsdogma im Alten Testament”, *ZTK* 52 (1955), pp. 1-42; published in English  
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57 as K. Koch, “Is There a Doctrine of Retribution in the Old Testament” in J. Crenshaw (ed.), *Theodicy in the Old*  
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59 *Testament* (London, 1972), pp. 57-87.  
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theological category. In Hebrew thought, he suggested, no judicial intervention is needed (or indeed possible) between deed and outcome. The two are not separable, but are internally and necessarily bound together as an ‘act-consequence connection’ (*Tun-Ergeben Zusammenhang*). The latter grows organically from the former, like a plant from a seed. Accordingly, every deed is *schicksalwirkende* – ‘fate-effecting’. It has its consequence built into it, such that it is almost nonsensical to separate the two. A person’s whole life, their whole ‘sphere of activity’, is characterised by this intrinsic causality. It is, in short, a *schicksalwirkende Tatsphäre*.

Drawing on Scandinavian scholars like J. Pedersen and K. Fahlgren,<sup>2</sup> Koch argued that such holistic thinking characterised the Hebrew mindset. Israelites had a ‘synthetic view of life’,<sup>3</sup> seeing the world as a totality, devoid of the compartmentalizing divisions that characterize the modern Western outlook, such as the division between act and consequence. This, it was argued, is evidenced in the Hebrew language. Many Hebrew roots can be used to describe both an ‘act’ (in our mode of thought), and its ‘consequence’.<sup>4</sup> So מַשֶּׁלֶם can sometimes mean ‘wrongdoing’ (*Missetat*) and sometimes ‘guilt’ or ‘punishment’ (*Schuld/Strafe*).<sup>5</sup> עָוֶן can mean ‘moral evil’ (*Bosheit*) and ‘misfortune’ (*Unglück*).<sup>6</sup> The same word describes both, therefore “Ursache und Wirkung sind... für den Israelite ein und dasselbe”.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> J. Pedersen, *Israel: Its Life and Culture*, (Copenhagen, 1926). K. Hj. Fahlgren, “Die Gegensätze von Sedaqa im Alten Testament”, in K. Koch (ed.), *Um das Prinzip der Vergeltung in Religion und Recht des Alten Testaments* (Darmstadt, 1972), pp. 87-129.

<sup>3</sup> Fahlgren, ‘*synthetische Lebensauffassung*’ pp. 126-129.

<sup>4</sup> Fahlgren. Koch, 1972, pp. 75-78, explicitly draws on Fahlgren.

<sup>5</sup> Fahlgren, p. 112.

<sup>6</sup> Fahlgren, p. 122.

<sup>7</sup> Fahlgren, p. 90.

1 Koch's theory has been very influential,<sup>8</sup> but few scholars accept it wholesale, and a  
2 number of criticisms may be raised. First, Koch's analysis can only account for a small  
3 amount of the biblical data. The *schicksalwirkende Tatsphäre* is most evident in Proverbs, but  
4 even there, some verses do not fit with Koch's analysis. These he conveniently ignores.<sup>9</sup> In  
5 particular, Yahweh and society seem to play a much more active role in enforcing  
6 consequences than Koch would allow.<sup>10</sup> Second, the anthropological suppositions behind the  
7 theory are dubious. The idea of 'synthetic view of life' was based on notions of the 'primitive'  
8 mind, which was always orientated towards grasping the totality.<sup>11</sup> Such psychological  
9 speculations have largely fallen out of scholarship.  
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21 Third, Koch's linguistic arguments for the unity of act and consequence are unsound.  
22 Hebrew may have one word (e.g. רָע) where others have two (e.g. 'evil' and 'misfortune'), but  
23 this does not mean that the Hebrew speaker understood no distinctions between different  
24 meanings. Linguistic structure cannot be directly mapped onto thought structure.<sup>12</sup> In English,  
25 we say only 'to know' where French has 'savoir' and 'connaître', German 'wissen' and  
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35 <sup>8</sup> The most positive and sensitive recent appraisal of Koch's views probably comes from J. Barton, *Ethics in*  
36 *Ancient Israel* (Oxford, 2014), esp. pp. 211-226.  
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38 <sup>9</sup> Koch makes no mention of the Yahweh cluster in Prov 16:1-9, for example. On the proverbs he omits in chs.  
39 10-13, see P. Hatton, *Contradiction in the Book of Proverbs: The Deep Waters of Counsel* (SOTS Monograph Series;  
40 Hampshire, 2008), pp. 83-116.  
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45 <sup>10</sup> The role of Yahweh has been examined by many scholars. See especially L. Boström, *The God of the Sages: The*  
46 *Portrayal of God in the Book of Proverbs* (Coniectanea Biblica Old Testament Series 29; Stockholm, 1990). On the  
47 role of society, see B. Janowski, "Die Tat Kehrt Zum Täter Zurück: Offene Fragen im Umkreis des "Tun-  
48 Ergehen-Zusammenhang", *ZTK* 91 (1994), pp. 247-271.  
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53 <sup>11</sup> E.g. A. R. Johnson, *The Vitality of the Individual in the Thought of Ancient Israel* (2<sup>nd</sup> edn.; Cardiff, 1964). For  
54 Johnson, totality thinking "is the 'Open Sesame' which unlocks the secrets of the Hebrew language and reveals  
55 the riches of the Israelite mind" p. 2.  
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59 <sup>12</sup> J. Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (Oxford, 1961), pp. 33-45.  
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‘kennen’. Is it therefore impossible for us to understand the distinction between ‘knowing’ a person and ‘knowing’ facts? If I know the native English speaker, I know this is not the case. The linguistic phenomenon cannot in itself tell us about any metaphysical connection.

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That said, however, the data Koch described are real enough, and deserve consideration. There are many sayings in Proverbs which do present the connection between act and consequence in apparently automatic terms. Many acts do seem ‘fate-effecting’. This is often the case, for example, in proverbs describing ‘the path’. This metaphor at once depicts the behaviour of an individual, and the consequences that come to him. The moral rectitude of traveller’s course is intrinsically bound together with favourability of his experiences along the way. I suggest that, instead of presupposing a *schicksalwirkende Tatsphäre*, these proverbs actively create one. They construct a metaphorical world where deeds and consequences correspond. Their purpose is not primarily for an explanation of ontology, but for motivation and rhetoric.

Viewing the *schicksalwirkende Tatsphäre* in this way avoids the three problems highlighted above. (1) It is not the only conceivable framework for the sages, but one model among many, constructed for rhetorical purpose. (2) It is not a presupposition of the ‘primitive mind’, but a skilful creation. (3) It does not seek a worldview in language structure and lexical stocks, but considers how words are deployed in context. As we explore the nuances of the metaphor, its fate-effecting nature will become evident.

### ***The ‘Path’ Metaphor***

The metaphor of a ‘path’ to depict life is frequently encountered across the Hebrew Bible; the Psalms, prophets, and Deuteronomy all making extensive use of the imagery.<sup>13</sup> Proverbs too

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<sup>13</sup> For the most extensive discussion of the metaphor in the HB, see M. P. Zehnder, *Wegmetaphorik im Alten Testament: Eine Semantische Untersuchung der alttestamentlichen und altorientalischen Weg-Lexeme mit besonderer*

employs it often, both in the instructions (chs. 1-9), and the sayings collections (chs. 10-29). My specific focus will be on the first sayings collection (10:1-22:16), where it seems to make a distinctive contribution.<sup>14</sup>

Proverbs lacks covenantal and salvation-historical themes in general, and these are equally absent from its path imagery. Unlike elsewhere, no link is made with walking with or before God in the Exodus.<sup>15</sup> The path is not explicitly linked with God's *Torah*,<sup>16</sup> and straying does not obviously imply following idols. Indeed, God's explicit role is minimal. Though he is more prevalent in chs. 1-9, the sayings only allude to him three times in connection with the path (10:29; 16:9; 20:24). Scholarly attention has been focussed on the image of the 'two paths' in Proverbs, traversed by diametrically opposed character types.<sup>17</sup> The path of the righteous stands apart from the path of the wicked, the gap between them unbreachable. While this impression is pervasive, there are variations in the imagery,<sup>18</sup> and other themes are sometimes central. In particular, I would like to comment on how Proverbs creates a *schicksalwirkende Tatsphäre* through its path imagery.

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*Berücksichtigung ihrer metaphorischen Verwendung* (BZAW 268; Berlin, 1999). For a historical survey of roads in ancient Israel, see D. A. Dorsey, *The Roads and Highways of Ancient Israel* (The Asor Library of Biblical and Near Eastern Archaeology; Baltimore, 1991).

<sup>14</sup> For discussions of the path metaphor in chs. 1-9, see N. C. Habel, "The Symbolism of Wisdom in Proverbs 1-9", *Interpretation* 26.2 (1972), pp. 131-157; S. Weeks, *Instruction and Imagery in Proverbs 1-9* (Oxford, 2007), esp. pp. 73-79; 148-154.

<sup>15</sup> A. Gros, *Je Suis La Route* (Thèmes Bibliques; Paris, 1961); O. Lund, *Way Metaphors and Way Topics in Isaiah 40-55* (Forschungen zum Alten Testament 2.28; Tübingen, 2007).

<sup>16</sup> W. P. Brown, *Seeing the Psalms: A Theology of Metaphor* (Louisville, 2002), pp. 31-54. However, Weeks (pp. 148-154) has suggested that these implications would have been evident for the post-exilic Jewish readers of Proverbs 1-9.

<sup>17</sup> Habel; D. P. Bricker, "The Doctrine of the 'Two Ways' in Proverbs", *JETS* 38.4 (1995) pp. 501-517.

<sup>18</sup> Fox distinguishes between two underlying metaphors: 'two paths' and 'many paths'. M. V. Fox, *Proverbs 1-9: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (Anchor Bible; New York, 2000), pp. 129-131.



1 The prevalence of the path metaphor in the literature may be because of its distinctive  
2 status in thought and language. Linguists have described ‘life is a path’ as a basic conceptual  
3 metaphor.<sup>19</sup> Conceptual metaphors are not mere poetic embellishment, but tools for  
4 understanding, to help structure thought. We take something difficult to understand, like life  
5 itself, and view it through the metaphor of something simpler, like a path. Through frequent  
6 use, the metaphor becomes conventionalised in language, comprehensible and accessible to  
7 all. This makes it particularly useful for short texts like proverbs, as it does not need lengthy  
8 explanation. The metaphor gives a basic conceptual structure, but is not absolutely rigid,  
9 allowing for flexibility, inconsistencies, and imaginative reconstructions.<sup>20</sup>

21 When we employ the metaphor, features from the ‘source domain’ (the path) are  
22 mapped onto the ‘target domain’ (life). Not just one image is relevant here, but a whole ‘image  
23 schema’. Thus, ‘conduct in life is motion along a path’; ‘dangerous situations in life are  
24 hazards on a path’; ‘advice about life is guidance along a path’.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, properties,  
25 relations, inferences, and patterns of reasoning may be mapped from one domain to the  
26 other. The way we conceptualise life is restructured by our knowledge of paths. Indeed, the  
27 mapping allows us “to impart... structure which is not there independent of the metaphor”.<sup>22</sup>  
28 In particular, as I will show, certain features of the path are fate-effecting. Acts intrinsically

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41 <sup>19</sup> For a classic work on ‘Conceptual Metaphor Theory’ discussing the ‘life is a path’ metaphor, see G. Lakoff and  
42 M. Turner, *More Than Cool Reason: A Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor* (Chicago, 1989). For applications of this theory  
43 to the ‘path’ in the HB, see A. Basson, “The Path Image Schema as Underlying Structure for the Metaphor  
44 ‘Moral Life is Journey’ in Psalm 25”, *OTE* 24.1 (2011) pp.19-29; O. Jäkel, “How Can Moral Man Understand  
45 The Road He Travels? Prospects and Problems of the Cognitive Approach to Religious Metaphor”, in K.  
46 Feyaerts (ed.), *The Bible Through Metaphor and Translation: A Cognitive Semantics Perspective* (Bern, 2003), pp. 55-86.

51 <sup>20</sup> The flexibility of the metaphor is particularly stressed by J. Lam, *Patterns of Sin in the Hebrew Bible: Metaphor,*  
52 *Culture, and the Making of a Religious Concept* (Oxford, 2015), pp. 164-165.

53 <sup>21</sup> For a fuller elaboration of the path image schema in HB, see Jäkel.

54 <sup>22</sup> Lakoff and Turner, p. 64.

1 lead to their consequences. The proverbs take this connection from the source world, and ask  
2 their readers to map it onto the target world of their own lives. This is a clever rhetorical  
3 strategy, encouraging the readers of the truth and obviousness of the connection, and  
4 persuading them to act accordingly.  
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9         Scholars often note the act-consequence connection in relation to the path  
10 metaphor.<sup>23</sup> The moral path is also salvific, the immoral one also destructive. However, few  
11 have explored the nuances of the imagery, nor delineated which particular features are fate-  
12 effecting. The rhetorical and motivational value of this connection has not been sufficiently  
13 analysed. To do so is my intention here. I hope to rehabilitate the *schicksalwirkende Tatsphäre*  
14 somewhat, not primarily as an ontological explanation of causality, but as a constructed  
15 metaphorical world, to fuel the reader's imagination and provide a motivational model.  
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### 33 **Fate-Effecting Deeds Along the Path**

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38 Many of the sayings in Prov 10:1-22:16 sketch tracks and vistas for their readers to explore  
39 imaginatively. The 'path' at once depicts the ethical course of its travellers and the quality of  
40 the journey, both acts and consequences. Often, subtle grammatical and semantic ambiguities  
41 bind the two still closer. In the world imagined, various different actions prove  
42 *schicksalwirkende*, 'fate-effecting'. Here, I will examine a number of these, and the rhetorical  
43 effect they have in Proverbs.  
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59 <sup>23</sup> e.g. Brown, pp. 36-39; Koch, 1983, pp. 135, 165; Zehnder, pp. 588-593.  
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### *Turning from evil*

מְסִלַּת יִשְׁרָיִם סוֹר מֵרָע שֶׁמֶר נִפְשׁוֹ נֹצֵר דְרָכָו: 16:17

*The highway of the upright turns from evil; he who watches over his path preserves his life.*

The first colon transports us to a highway traversed by upright men. Its course depicts their conduct, turning from evil (סוֹר מֵרָע). The use of the infinitive construct, סוֹר, means that the path or the travellers could be ‘turning’. In the latter case, individual agency is stressed. The upright lead sensitive ethical lives, ready to divert their course when it tends towards wrongdoing (cf. Prov 3:7; 4:27; 13:19; 14:16; 16:6). Simultaneously, the path turns from its trajectory to tragedy, for סוֹר מֵרָע becomes a fate-effecting deed. The polysemy of רָע is activated, shifting from ‘moral evil’ to ‘disaster’. Elsewhere, travellers turn (סוֹר) from Sheol (15:24), and the ‘snares of death’ (13:14; 14:27). Here, the misfortune is simply an ‘evil’ (רָע). An undisclosed calamity lurks ominously before the readers, motivating them to change their course.

It may be significant that this road is a מְסִלָּה ‘highway’. This appears to have been a carefully prepared or constructed road (Isa 40:3; 49:11; 62:10).<sup>24</sup> W. Tidwell suggests that it was broad, clearly delimited, and easily passible. Well-kept and possibly surfaced, the traveller stumbles over no rocks nor slips in any mud.<sup>25</sup> It is precisely the type of road whose travellers ‘avoid harm’ – סוֹר מֵרָע.

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<sup>24</sup> There has been dispute about the precise designation of this term. Dorsey (pp. 228-233) believes it to be a major public thoroughfare: a main regional road, national highway, or international thoroughfare. This remains the standard explanation of the term. Tidwell disputes this for the biblical period, suggesting instead that it is an approach road to a city. The differences are not essential for the interpretation of this proverb. N. L. Tidwell, “No Highway! The Outline of a Semantic Description of *Mesillā*”, *VT* 45 (1995) pp.251-269.

<sup>25</sup> Tidwell, pp. 266, 269

1 The second colon pleases the ear with its tight internal parallelism, שָׁמַר נַפְשׁוֹ  
 2 ('preserves his life') closely mirroring its partner נִצַּר דְּרָכּוֹ ('watches his way'), phonologically  
 3 and morphologically.<sup>26</sup> As I have translated them, the first refers to a consequence, and the  
 4 second to an act. It is ambiguous which is subject and which predicate, suggesting the mutual  
 5 entailment of act and consequence. However, the semantics may be still more complex, each  
 6 phrase intertwining act and consequence within itself. שָׁמַר נַפְשׁוֹ sometimes means 'preserving  
 7 one's life' (Prov 13:3; 19:16), but elsewhere refers to 'watching oneself', taking care of ethical  
 8 behaviour (Deut 4:9,15; 23:11). Similarly, נִצַּר דְּרָכּוֹ may have a double significance. Elsewhere,  
 9 the son is commended to 'watch over' (נִצַּר) his heart (Prov 4:23) and his mouth (13:3). Here  
 10 he must 'watch over his way' to ensure its moral direction. In so doing he will 'protect' (נִצַּר) it  
 11 (cf. Prov 2:8; 13:6). Within the world constructed by this imagery, attending to the path is a  
 12 *schicksalwirkende Tat*, impacting both course and condition, conduct and consequence.  
 13 Ruminating on the acts and consequences interwoven in this proverb, the reader learns to  
 14 connect them in their own life, that they might turn their own path from evil.

### 37 *Going astray*

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 41 14:22 הֲלוֹא־יִתְעוּ חֲרָשֵׁי רָע וְחֲסִד וְאֱמֶת חֲרָשֵׁי טוֹב:

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 44 *Do they not go astray, those who devise evil? But kindness and loyalty – those who devise good.*

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 48 This proverb contrasts two polar character types: the 'devisers of evil' (חֲרָשֵׁי רָע), and the  
 49 'devisers of good' (חֲרָשֵׁי טוֹב). The former 'go astray' (יִתְעוּ). This may refer to deviating  
 50 morally, like the Israelites whom Manasseh 'led astray to do evil' (לְעֲשׂוֹת אֶת־הָרָע) ... 2 Kgs  
 51 21:9=2 Chro 33:9). This presupposes an ethical norm; probably not here the covenantal law

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 59 <sup>26</sup> Cf. the very similar phrase in Prov 13:3a נִצַּר כִּי שָׁמַר נַפְשׁוֹ

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as elsewhere in HB, but the teacher’s commandment, societal values, or an inbuilt moral plumb-line. תעה can also suggest ‘to stagger about’, as though inebriated.<sup>27</sup> These apparent ‘artisans’ (חַרְשֵׁי) of evil have the intellectual clarity of a drunk.

Furthermore, within the metaphorical framework, ‘straying’ implies harmful consequences. It depicts aimless wandering, like animals off course (Ex 23:4; Isa 53:6; Ps 119:176), or desolate, directionless nomads (Gen 21:14). The scorching heat of trackless wastes (Ps 107:4; Job 12:24) is the inevitable fate of deviants. Within this metaphorical world, ‘straying’ is a fate-effecting deed. The connection is deduced by the reader, and motivates them against moral error.

The second colon connects the ‘devisers of good’ with ‘kindness and loyalty’ (חֶסֶד וְאֱמֻנָה), but does not make the relationship clear. It may be taken as a predicate – subject arrangement: such men *are* benevolence itself.<sup>28</sup> They embody social solidarity in their own communities. Alternatively, they may *meet* kindness and loyalty.<sup>29</sup> Just as Righteousness (צְדִיקָה) protects the blameless of way (13:6), and Evil (רָעָה) pursues sinners (13:21), these personifications treat the traveller according to their nature. They may be trustworthy guides, preventing him from straying, and bestowing goodness upon him. Elsewhere they are God’s heralds on the road (Ps 89:15[14]). A divine sender is not mentioned (though not necessarily excluded) here. The second colon, then, may refer to acts or consequences. The reader might discern both and infer a connection between them: those who are kind and loyal will be shown kindness and loyalty in return.

Similar double meanings are evident in Prov 10:17. It begins אֶרְחָק לְחַיִּים שׁוֹמֵר מוֹסֵר ‘A path to life – the one who heeds discipline’. As in 14:22b, the relationship between the two

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<sup>27</sup> Isa 19:13f, 21:4, 28:7; Jer 50:6; Job 12:25.

<sup>28</sup> Some translations add a verb ‘show kindness and loyalty’ (ESV marg., NIV marg.), or translate adjectivally ‘are loyal and faithful’ (REB)

<sup>29</sup> So many translations; e.g. KJV, RSV, ESV, NIV, NASB, HCSB.

halves is ambiguous. Taken as predicate – subject, the disciplined one becomes a path to guide others (i.e. the colon depicts his acts).<sup>30</sup> Or perhaps he walks the path to life himself (consequence).<sup>31</sup> The proverb continues *וְעוֹנֵב תּוֹכַחַת מִתְּעָה* ‘but the one who rejects reproof leads astray’. Being untrained himself, he proves no guide to others, simultaneously leading them to misconduct and misfortune. In this metaphorical world, advice about behaviour is fate-effecting, not only for others but for yourself, for the guide walks with the travellers.<sup>32</sup>

In 21:16a, *אָדָם תּוֹעָה מִדֶּרֶךְ הַשְּׂכָל* ‘a man strays from the way of insight’, i.e. he errs from wisdom ethics. Again, the deviation proves *schicksalwirkende*, for *בְּקִהָל רְפָאִים יָנִיחַ* ‘he will rest in the assembly of the dead’ (21:16b). The path had potential for prosperity (note double meaning of *שָׁכַל*; e.g. Josh 1:8; Prov 17:8); by blinding wandering from its course he has ensured his own destruction (cf. Prov 5:5-6; 7:25-27; 9:18).

### *Straightening the way*

11:5a *צְדָקַת תְּמִים תִּיִשֶׁר דְּרָכּוֹ*

<sup>30</sup> So NIV.

<sup>31</sup> So most translations.

<sup>32</sup> It is possible that this is an internal hiphil ‘leads himself astray’. These occur frequently with other verbs of motion. E.g. *הִקְרִיב* ‘to (cause oneself to) come close’; *הִרְחִיק* ‘to (cause oneself to) go far away’; *הִשִּׁיב* ‘to (cause oneself to) return’. Though the passage is difficult, an internal hiphil of *תָּעָה* may also occur in Jer 42:19b-20a: *הַעִילֹתִי בְּכֶם הַיּוֹם כִּי הִתְעַתְּם בְּנַפְשׁוֹתֵיכֶם*: (Q; K reads *הִתְעַתְּם*) ‘I have warned you this day that *you have (cause yourselves to have) gone astray* at the cost of your lives.’ If this interpretation is valid, there may be another layer in the act-consequence double meaning here: he leads others astray (causative hiphil; acts) and thereby leads himself astray (internal hiphil; consequences).

*The righteousness of the blameless straightens his way*

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5 Within this metaphorical framework, the direction of the moral path is variously construed.  
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7 Sometimes it turns from wrongdoing (סור מרע); here it stays straight. Indeed, by their  
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9 righteousness, the blameless intentionally ‘straighten’ (ישר, piel) it against any foolish  
10  
11 temptations calling them to turn aside (cf. Prov 4:25; 9:15; 15:21). Conduct is ישר ‘straight,  
12  
13 right’ if it adheres to ethical norms, set externally and not simply by one’s own subjective  
14  
15 judgment (Prov 12:15; 14:12=16:25; 21:2). Conversely, wicked paths are ‘crooked’ (עקש Prov  
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17 2:15; 10:9; 22:5; 28:6,18, הַפְּכָפֶה 21:8). Such ideas are so familiar in Hebrew convention that ישר  
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19 and עקש have been lexicalised to refer to morally upright and twisted men respectively.  
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24 As well as being ‘straight’, a ישר דרך is ‘level’.<sup>33</sup> Piel ישר may refer to levelling a road:  
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26 removing obstacles and stones, smoothing the surface (e.g. Isa 40:3-4; 45:2).<sup>34</sup> Undoubtedly a  
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28 laborious process, this metaphor suggests the careful, continuous, wearisome work required  
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30 for the ethical life. But it is worth the effort. The path becomes easily traversable, smooth and  
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32 gentle, giving no cause for stumbling (Jer 31:9). It is straight and direct, destination in sight (Ps  
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34 107:7), and promising a safe passage (Ezra 8:21). In this metaphorical world,  
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36 levelling/straightening one’s path is a *schicksalwirkende Tat*, with implications for both deeds  
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38 and consequences. The reader is encouraged to deduce this connection, and to map it onto  
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40 their own world, that they might be motivated to righteousness.  
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***Setting traps along the way***

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53 11:5 צְדָקַת תְּמִים תִּישָׁר דְּרָכּוֹ וּבְרִשְׁעָתוֹ יִפֹּל רֶשָׁע:

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57 <sup>33</sup> Alonso Schökel, L. ישר in G. J. Botterweck *et. al* (eds.), *TDOT vol. 6*, (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1990) pp. 465-466.

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59 <sup>34</sup> Dorsey, p. 3.  
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62  
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*The righteousness of the blameless straightens his way; but in his wickedness the wicked falls.*

11:6 צְדָקַת יִשְׂרָאֵל תְּצִילֵם וּבְהִנֹּחַת בְּגָדִים יִלְכְּדוּ:

*The righteousness of the upright saves them; but in the desire of the treacherous they are captured.*

The wicked man in 11:5, however, cannot hope for such a safe journey, and he falls ‘in his wickedness’ (בְּרָשָׁעָתוֹ). Wickedness is metaphorically depicted as a hazard, imperiling the way.<sup>35</sup> Similarly, elsewhere, one falls ‘into evil’ (נָפַל בְּרַעַ(ה), 13:17; 17:20; cf. 14:32; 24:16). Far from the straight, level path of the blameless, pits (Prov 26:27; 28:10) and snares (13:14; 14:27; 22:5) may lurk around a corner or beneath the uneven surface. Imagining the scene, the traveler-reader might tangle his feet in a net (Prov 1:17; 29:5), for a striking phonological similarity sounds in his ear: בְּרָשָׁעָתוֹ (‘in his net’) – בְּרָשָׁעָתוֹ (‘in his wickedness’).<sup>36</sup> Setting wickedness in his path has become fate-effecting, causing his downfall. Similarly, in the next proverb (its thematic and lexical pair) the treacherous are captured in their הִנָּה. The meaning of this term is disputed. It may be a by-form of אָוֶה ‘desire’ (cf. Prov 10:3; Mic 7:3; Ps 52:9[7]), or an unusual singular form (cf. Job 6:2; 30:13) of הָוֶה ‘disaster’. Possibly, a wordplay is intended, connecting acts (his wicked desires) and consequences (calamity).

12:6 דְּבַרֵי רָשָׁעִים אֶרְבִּי-דָם וּפִי יִשְׂרָאֵל יִצִּילֵם:

*The words of the wicked are an ambush of blood; but the mouth of the upright will save them.*

<sup>35</sup> Alternatively, ב may be parsed instrumentally/causally ‘falls because of his wickedness’.

<sup>36</sup> J. S. Kselman, “Ambiguity and Wordplay in Proverbs XI”, *VT* 52.4 (2002) pp. 545-548.



12:13 בְּפִשֵׁעַ שְׂפָתַיִם מוֹקֵשׁ רָע וַיֵּצֵא מִצָּרָה צַדִּיק:

*In the transgression of lips is evil man's snare;<sup>37</sup> but the righteous comes out from distress.*

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7 These two proverbs present very similar images: a trap is set in the first colon; it is evaded in  
8  
9 the second. The wickedness of the men is powerfully captured by the imagery. Like bandits  
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11 and robbers, they set a bloody ambush (אַרְב־דָּם) for their unsuspecting victims (12:6). Like  
12  
13 ruthless hunters, they lay out a snare (מוֹקֵשׁ, 12:13).<sup>38</sup> Their means are their words, which in  
14  
15 Proverbs have potency over life and death (18:21). Perhaps they aim to catch their prey  
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17 through slander, false charges, malicious plotting, or bad advice. But to no avail: the upright  
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19 and righteous will escape (12:6b, 13b).  
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24 The second colon may trigger a rereading of the first. Antithetical parallelisms are the  
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26 norm in this part of the book,<sup>39</sup> and may be found here. The upright are saved in 6b, so the  
27  
28 wicked must be harmed in 6a. The righteous man comes out from distress in 13b, so the evil  
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30 man must enter it in 13a. Interpreted thus, the wicked set an ambush for themselves; the evil  
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32 man's snare closes upon his own neck. The genitive is reconstrued: the מוֹקֵשׁ רָע is not set *by*  
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34 the evil man, but *for* him. This motif is well-known in Proverbs. Indeed, “he who digs a pit  
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36 will fall into it” (26:27a; cf. 28:10; 29:5). The sinners of chapter 1 attempt to entice the naïve  
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38 son to banditry: “Let us lie in wait for blood” (נִאָרְבָּה לְדָם; Prov 1:11). Little do they know that  
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40 this blood will be their own (1:18). Strewing the way with traps inevitably effects fate, for the  
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42 huntsman himself stumbles into them.  
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52 <sup>37</sup> Or ‘an evil snare’.

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54 <sup>38</sup> The precise meaning of this term is disputed. It may designate some sort of clapping device, related to the  
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56 Syriac root *nqš*. See G. Gerleman, “Contributions to the Old Testament Terminology of the Chase” in *Bulletin de*  
57  
58 *la Société Royale des Lettres de Lund 1945-6 (Årsberättelse 1945-46)* (Lund, 1946), pp. 79-90.

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60 <sup>39</sup> Antithetical parallelisms are particularly prevalent in Prov 10-15.  
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***Clearing thorns from the way***

15:19 דָּרַךְ עֵצֶל כְּמִשְׁכַּת חֶדְק וְאֶרְחַ יִשְׁרִים סְלֵלָה

*The way of the sluggard is like a hedge of thorns; but the path of the upright is a highway.*

This proverb graphically contrasts two paths: one overgrown with thorns, grudgingly trudged by the lazy; the other a highway for the upright. Within this metaphorical world, both characters may have effected their fate. The sluggard (עֵצֶל) is caricatured and condemned in Proverbs. Indolent and insolent, his hands refuse to labour (21:25). God forbid he should venture outside (22:13; 26:13) or even leave his bed (6:9; 26:14). Through lack of labour, his vineyard is overrun with thistles and nettles (24:31), and here, his path with thorns.<sup>40</sup> This has direct implications for the quality of the journey. Passing through a thorn hedge is a laborious and painful process. Your progress is slow, feet get caught, clothing snags; pricks and scratches draw blood.

By contrast, the upright man's path has been carefully constructed, and 'cast up' (סֵלֵל) as a highway.<sup>41</sup> סְלֵלָה is a passive participle, and the agent may be the upright man himself. No effort is too great in ensuring an ethical course. And the path so prepared rewards its workmen with the promise of peril-free passage (cf. Isa 35:8; 57:14). Attentiveness to your moral course is a *schicksalwirkende Tat*, determining your experience of the journey. The reader maps this correspondence onto his own life, motivating him to diligent care of his course.

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<sup>40</sup> מִשְׁכָּה (from שׁוּךְ, 'to hedge up') is found only here, but related nouns occur: מְסוּכָה (from the by-form סוּךְ) in Mic 7:4 and מִשְׁכָּה (from שָׁכַךְ) in Isa 5:5. These seem to have a basic sense of 'hedge'. אֶדְקָה seems to be a brier, and only occurs here and in Mic 7:4 (parallel to מְסוּכָה).

<sup>41</sup> Dorsey (pp. 229-233) has argued that סֵלֵל refers not to 'casting up', but to 'levelling'. Either way it implies laborious construction.

1 Similarly, in Prov 22:5, צַנִּים פְּהִים בְּדֶרֶךְ עֲקֹשׁ שׁוֹמֵר נַפְשׁוֹ יִרְחַק מֵהֵם: ‘Thorns, traps, in the  
 2 crooked path; he who preserves his life keeps far from them.’ This proverb combines a  
 3 number of fate-effecting features we have already encountered. The man in *a* has acted  
 4 wrongly: failing to clear thorns;<sup>42</sup> laying down traps; choosing a crooked course.<sup>43</sup> He may  
 5 suffer accordingly, stumbling into one of his self-set hazards hidden round a corner. By  
 6 contrast, the man in *b* keeps perils far from his path, demonstrating his uprightness and  
 7 securing his prosperity. He ‘watches himself’ ethically, and thus ‘preserves his life’ (שׁוֹמֵר נַפְשׁוֹ;  
 8 cf. Prov 16:17 above).  
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## 24 Conclusion

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 28 In this investigation, I have explored the metaphorical world constructed by the proverbs’  
 29 ‘path’ imagery. In this world, a number of features are *schicksalwirkende*, ‘fate-effecting’. If you  
 30 turn from evil (סוּר מֵרַע), or straighten (יִשָּׁר) your way morally, your path will simultaneously  
 31 turn from disaster or have a direct and easy course. But if your behaviour strays (תָּעַה) from  
 32 ethical norms, you will also wander into hardship. If you set traps for others, or let thorns  
 33 grow over your path, you imperil yourself by them. Your whole ‘sphere of activity’ is  
 34 characterised by this act-consequence connection. It is a *schicksalwirkende Tatsphäre*.  
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49 <sup>42</sup> צַנִּים is a hapax, and its meaning is disputed. A number of scholars (e.g. Waltke) propose emending to צַמִּים  
 50 ‘traps’, which occurs with פָּה in Job 18:9. This has some Versional support – while LXX apparently supports MT  
 51 with πρὶ βόλοι: ‘prickly plants’, Syr (followed by Targ) has *nšb*, ‘net, snare’. For discussion, see B. Waltke, *The Book*  
 52 *of Proverbs: Chapters 16-31* (NICOT; Grand Rapids, Mich, 2005) p. 194 n. 8.  
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57 <sup>43</sup> This interprets עֲקֹשׁ as an adjective qualifying דֶּרֶךְ. Alternatively it may be a noun in construct: ‘the path of the  
 58 crooked man’  
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However, contra-Koch, this *Tatsphäre* is not simply presupposed by the sages. Rather, it is constructed by them as a metaphor. It is not primarily meant as an ontological reflection of the real world, but it has rhetorical significance. A number of scholars have suggested that the act-consequence connection in Proverbs is largely a motivational tool.<sup>44</sup> By describing graphic consequences, the sages can persuade their students to good behaviour. Here, they are threatened with disaster, barren wastelands, hazardous journeys imperilled with thorns and traps. Such they might avoid through navigating an ethical course.

The act-consequence connections are obvious in the metaphorical world. The students are encouraged to recognise them, and to map them onto the target world of their own lives, where they may not be quite so evident. By themselves deducing the connection and the mapping, the students actively engage their minds, and may be convinced by their own deductions. The connection is made to seem obvious in the target world too. Elsewhere, Yahweh or society may enforce the consequences, but here no external agent is specified. This stresses the responsibility of the student. If I have suffered after erring morally, it is I who have wandered into destructive wastelands. No external agent can be blamed for somehow causing the connection between ‘straying’ and ‘straying’. Furthermore, the consequence is entirely appropriate for the act, and may not be argued against.<sup>45</sup> The *schicksalwirkende Tatsphäre*, then, is a powerful metaphorical construction, that the student might walk the straight and peril-free path ahead.

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<sup>44</sup> E.g. S. L. Adams, *Wisdom in Transition: Act and Consequence in Second Temple Instructions* (JSJSup 125; Leiden, 2008); Boström.

<sup>45</sup> J. Barton, “Natural Law and Poetic Justice in the Old Testament”, *JTS* 30.1 (1979) pp.1-14; P. D. Miller Jr., *Sin and Judgment in the Prophets: A Stylistic and Theological Analysis* (SBL Monograph Series 27; Chicago, 1982).