Image Schemata of Containment and Path as Underlying Structures for Core Metaphors in Psalm 142

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ABSTRACT

The psalms of lamentation depict a situation in which waves of anguish threaten to engulf the righteous. Surrounded by hostile forces, voices of distress implore Yahweh to intervene in a transformative and restorative manner. The supplicant bemoans the fact that the adversaries have hidden snares in his path in an attempt to bring about his downfall. It should therefore come as no surprise that in the psalms of lamentation snares symbolise containment and subsequent separation from Yahweh and the religious community. Psalm 142 can be regarded as a case in point. Drawing on the most recent assumptions related to image schema research, this contribution argues that the container image schema serves as the underlying structure of the psalmist's metaphorical reference to the hidden snare and the experience of being led out of prison. In addition, the exploration elucidates the link between the container image schema and the path image schema in Psalm 142. The investigation illustrates how the poet's bodily experience of containment and motion along a path allows for the conceptualisation of and reasoning about particular abstract domains.

A   INTRODUCTION

As bold, daring and passionate speech, the psalms of lamentation are laden with urgent and desperate cries directed at Yahweh.[1] In fear-stricken situations where foes ceaselessly endeavour to effectuate the demise of the righteous,

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[1]   'It is an act of bold faith on the one hand, because it insists that the world must be experienced as it really is and not in some pretended way. On the other hand, it is bold because it insists that all such experiences of disorder are a proper subject for discourse with God. There is nothing out of bounds, nothing precluded or inappropriate. Everything properly belongs in the conversation of the heart. To withhold parts of life from that conversation is in fact to withhold part of life from the sovereignty of God. Thus these psalms make the important connection: everything must be brought to speech, must be addressed to God, who is the final reference for all of life' (Brueggemann 1984:52).

only divine help can bring about a change in the circumstances of the beleaguered. Even though these poems are uttered in situations of distress, they are also expressive of a hope for a change in these circumstances, which will be brought about by Yahweh's transformative actions. The psalms of lament are one of the most important pieces of evidence for ancient Israel's understanding of her own history, an understanding which recognises past, present and future as bound together under God's control (cf. Westermann 1989:23).[2] The act of beseeching Yahweh to intervene thus bespeaks the trust that Yahweh hears and cares for the righteous. However, before Yahweh's intervention takes effect, the supplicant has to deal with the wickedness of his adversaries. Around every corner, they lurk with malicious intent and their malevolence and treachery know no bounds. According to Goeke (1971:56) the 'Denken und Sinnen der Feinde ist auf Unheil und Verderben gerichtet, und das Böse steigt aus den Tiefen ihres Herzens auf'. In many psalms of lament, the supplicant bemoans the fact that his adversaries have hidden a snare in his path. Various poetical strategies[3] are employed to depict the enemies as ruthless hunters who bide their time in bringing the psalmist down. The prevalence of hunting terminology in the psalms of lamentation accounts for the multiple references to nets and snares.[4] In Psalm 142, the snare is an apt and powerful image to depict danger posed by the foes. For the supplicant, this device symbolises containment, separation and a reduced quality of life.[5] No doubt for the ancient Israelite any separation from Yahweh and the assembly of the righteous was tantamount to death.

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[2]   As far as the element of hope in the individual psalms of lament is concerned, Schmid (1974:152) writes as follows: 'Dabei geht es nicht um eine ideologische Überhöhung unzureichender Verhältnisse, vielmehr ist alles getragen von einem tiefen Vertrauen in die göttliche Macht der Ordnung und des Heils und das heißt gleichzeitig vom Vertrauen in die ordnende, heilschaffende Macht Gottes'. According to Goeke (1971:165) 'Alle Zuwendung Jahwes zum Menschen versteht der Beter als Realisierung und Aktualisierung der einen übergreifenden und umgreifenden Huld, die Israel insgesamt in der Erwählung und Führung von Jahwe erfahren hat, im Kult vergegenwärtigt weiß und in den Verheißungen der Zukunft als tragenden Grund aller kommenden Geschichte erkennt'.

[3]   Brown (2002:16) eloquently remarks: 'The book of the Psalms confronts the reader with a bewildering array of images embedded in various prayers, praises, and instructions, all cast in language that is concrete yet stereotypical and open: expressions of conflict and sickness, weakness and strength, security and threat, blessing and distress'.

[4]   As Riede (2000:339) aptly observes, 'Zur Schilderung seiner Not stellt sich der Beter als ein von Jägern gehetztes Tier dar, dem mit Hilfe verschiedener Jagdwerkzeuge nachgestellt wird' (cf. also Goeke 1971:70). For a discussion of hunting methods in ancient Israel and the ancient Near East, cf. Riede (2000:339-346).

[5]   'In zahlreichen Psalmen beklagt der Beter eine Schädigung seines vitalen leibhaftigen Daseins, die sich in völliger Hilflosigkeit allen Widerfahrnissen seines Lebens gegenüber auswirkt' (Goeke 1971:12).

Given the significance of metaphors of containment in Psalm 142, this exploration attempts to explicate the underlying image schematic structure of these metaphorical expressions. Drawing on recent assumptions related to image schema research, this contribution argues that the *container* image schema structures the psalmist's reference to the hidden snare and the experience of being led out of prison. In addition, the paper discusses the relation between the *container* image schema and the *path* image in Psalm 142. It will be illustrated how the poet's bodily experience allows for the conceptualisation of and reasoning about abstract domains.

B   TRANSLATION WITH TEXTUAL-CRITICAL NOTES

1a   A Maskil of David when he was in a cave. A Prayer.
2a   with my voice I cry to the Lord,
2b   with my voice I plead to the Lord for mercy.
3a   I pour out my complaint before him,[6]
3b   before him I tell about my troubles.
4a   When my spirit faints,[7]
4b   you know my way[8]
4c   in the path where I walk,
4d   they have hidden a snare for me.
5a   Look to the right and see,[9]
5b   no one takes notice of me,
5c   I have no refuge,[10]
5d   no one cares for my life.
6a   I cry to you O Lord,
6b   I say, 'You are my refuge',

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[6]   Literally: 'to his face'.

[7]   The BHS draws attention to a similar occurrence of רוח 'spirit' and עטף 'faint' (hitp) in Ps 77:4. Noteworthy in this instance is the omission of עלי (cf. also Brown 2002:37). It is, however, unnecessary to omit עלי in Psalm 142:4 on the basis of Psalm 77:4 because with psychological predicates (verbs of thinking, feeling, rejoicing, grieving) על governs the object of interest. When the subject feels the pathos 'upon' himself the על phrase is reflexive (Waltke & O'Connor 1990:217). Most scholars (cf. Briggs & Briggs 1907:511; Weiser 1962:812; Van der Ploeg 1974: 460; Rogerson & McKay 1977:165; VanGemeren 1991:849) likewise retain עלי.

[8]   It is not necessary to follow the LXX and the Syriac versions, which render the plural of נתיבה 'way'.

[9]   The BHS suggests that instead of וּרְאֵה 'see' (imperative) וְרָאֹה (infinitive absolute) should be read (cf. also Van der Ploeg 1974:460). On the basis of v. 5a as the renewal of the petition requesting Yahweh to see the plight of the supplicant, the MT can be retained (cf. Briggs & Briggs 1907:511; VanGemeren 1991:850; Brown 2002:37).

[10]   Literally: 'a place of refuge has perished from me' (אבד מנוס ממני). This translation follows the New International Version (cf. Weiser 1962:812; Van der Ploeg 1974:460; VanGemeren 1991:850).

6c   my portion in the land of the living.
7a   Give heed to my cry,
7b   because I am very weak,[11]
7c   deliver me from my pursuers,
7d   because they are too strong for me.
8a   Lead me out of prison,
8b   so that I may praise your name,
8c   the righteous will surround me,
8d   when you will offer bountifully to me.[12]

C   ANALYSIS OF THE STYLISTIC AND POETIC ELEMENTS OF PSALM 142

Structurally, Psalm 142 can be divided into the following strophes: (i) urgent appeal to Yahweh (vv. 2-4b), (ii) description of affliction (vv. 4c-6c), (iii) petition and public thanksgiving (vv. 7a-8).[13] Such a division highlights the fact that each section begins with a complaint or petition and moves towards a confession of trust (vv. 4b, 6bc, 8b). Different words are repeated to create emphasis: קולי ('with my voice': v. 2), לפניו ('before him': v. 2), יהוה ('Yahweh': vv. 2ab; 6a; cf. also שמך: 'your name': v. 8b), זעק ('cry': vv. 2a, 6a), נפש ('my soul': vv. 5d; 8a), אַתה ('you': vv. 4b; 6b), עלי ('for, to me': vv. 4a; 8d). In an introductory appeal, the psalmist urgently lifts up his voice to Yahweh as a means of bringing the current affliction to the deity's attention. Unable to contain his distress, the supplicant cries, pleads, pours out and tells about his trouble before the deity (vv. 2, 3). These words underscore the urgency of the prayer. Apart from accentuating the sense of access, the repetition of לפניו ('before him') in v. 2 also surrounds the words that describe the supplicant's situation: complaint and trouble (cf. Kidner 1975:473). The notion articulated in vv. 2-3 is taken up in vv. 6-7 'I cry to you O Lord … Listen to my cry …'. In the opening verses, the psalmist expresses his intense desire to be heard by Yahweh through a synonymous parallelism:

'With my voice I cry to the Lord,
with my voice I plead to the Lord for mercy.
I pour out my complaint before him,

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[11]   Literally: 'because I am brought very low' (כי-דלותי מאד). A literal translation is offered by the New Revised Standard Version and the New English Bible (cf. also Briggs & Briggs 1907:511; Rogerson & McKay 1979:165). The rendition provided here interprets this expression as a metaphor of distress (cf. Brown et al. 1974:195).

[12]   This translation follows the LXX, which has the equivalent of עד. For similar emendations, cf. Weiser (1962:813), Van der Ploeg (1974:460) and Rogerson & McKay (1977:165). The focus is on a specific point in time when Yahweh will bestow his blessings on the supplicant.

[13]   For other structural outlines of Psalm 142, cf. Briggs & Briggs (1907), Van der Ploeg (1974), Kidner (1975), Allen (1983), VanGemeren (1991) and Davidson (1998).

before him I tell about my troubles' (vv. 2-3).

With regard to the nouns and verbs employed by the poet, v. 3 reveals a chiastic structure:

שִׂיחִי   שְׁפֹךְ

צָרָתִי   נֶגֶד

In the second strophe (vv. 4c-6c) the psalmist specifically draws attention to his affliction. Through a hidden snare, the enemy attempts to impede the supplicant on his journey (v. 4cd).[14] The image of the hidden snare '… meint das ständige Ausgeliefertsein an das heimtückische Treiben der Feinde. Sicher erkennt der Beter darin eine konkrete Gefährdung gewalttätiger Art' (Goeke 1971:71). The fear of confinement is exacerbated by feelings of rejection and isolation (v. 5).[15] No doubt in a society where individual identity was embedded in the community, any form of isolation was tantamount to social death. Verses 4-5 thus spell out the crises the psalmist is facing. The supplicant expresses his experience of loneliness through a synonymous parallelism in v. 5:

'no one takes notice of me …
no one cares for my life,
I have no refuge …'.[16]

Even on the traditional position of support, that is, 'to the right', the supplicant can find no help. However, statements of loneliness and helplessness expressed in v. 5 are countered by a confession of assurance in v. 6 where the psalmist emphatically says to Yahweh 'You are my refuge'. This line of thought is pronounced as an antithetical parallelism between vv. 5c and 6b:

'I have no refuge,
I say: You are my refuge …'.

As regards the expression of confidence in v. 6b Riede (2000:354) writes, 'Angesichts der überall lauernden, unsichtbaren Gefahren aber hofft der Beter, daß Gott ihn aus den verborgenen Fallen zieht und auf einen Fels stellt, ja daß Gott ihm selbst zum Fels wird'. Noteworthy is the repetition of אתה (you) which focuses the attention on Yahweh who, as refuge, can bring about a

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[14]   According to Kellermann (1989:551) 'Fallenstellen bedeutet Freiheitsentzug und Lebensbedrohung'.

[15]   Compare the remark of Riede (2000:389) in this regard 'Wenn der Beter wie ein wildes Tier gejagd wird, dann ist er aus dem Sozialverband ausgestoßen und Bestandteil der Chaoswelt geworden'.

[16]   Cf. also Job 11:20; Jer 25:35; Amos 2:14.

change in the psalmist's fear-stricken situation. In addition to the antithetical parallelism between vv. 5c and 6b, vv. 5cd and 6bc likewise form an antithetical parallelism in an A/B/B/A pattern:

> 'no one cares for my life …
> I have no refuge,
> I say, "You are my refuge"
> my portion in the land of the living'.

In v. 6c, the poet masterfully augments the ideas expressed in v. 4b. Yahweh not only knows the way of the psalmist, but is also the one who offers life in the midst of affliction. Even in the worst possible circumstance, the supplicant can depend on Yahweh for deliverance. The utterance 'because I am weak' of v. 7b therefore links up with the expression 'when my spirit faints' of v. 4a.

Striking in v. 7 is the description of the conduct of the foes. Whereas v. 4d depicts them as ambushers, v. 7c refers to them as pursuers: thus an intensification of wickedness. They can hardly contain their eager to vanquish the psalmist. The request to be heard (v. 7a) is accompanied by complaint (v. 7b) and a second request for deliverance is made in v. 8a. As his energies dwindle, the supplicant makes one last effort and utters a desperate cry in an attempt to invoke Yahweh to act decisively in the current situation. The distress caused by his pursuers, the uncertainty of his fate and the isolation which leaves the supplicant to his own resources press so heavily upon him that the outcry breaks forth from him with elemental force (cf. Weiser 1962:814).

Whereas the first request for salvation was accompanied by complaint, the second is supported by the poet's vow to praise the deity (v. 8b). Moreover, in v. 5 the psalmist's complaint was uttered in loneliness, while in v. 8 he will offer praise to the deity in the assembly of the righteous. In v. 5 the supplicant suffered total isolation, but now he voices his final assurance in v. 8b of being in the presence of the community of faith (v. 8cd). The confession of assurance is grounded in the belief that the lament reaches beyond silent suffering to Yahweh who has authority beyond the present crushing and pain producing circumstance (cf. Brueggemann 1992:51).[17] Solitary confinement in v. 5 will make way for communal solidarity in v. 8. The righteous live in solidarity and the foundation of their solidarity is Yahweh (cf. Van der Ploeg 1974:463).

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[17]   'Isolation in loneliness and fellowship grounded in a common faith are the two poles around which the thoughts of the psalmist revolve as he wrestles in prayer … In holding fast to his trust in God the worshipper enters upon the way which leads to the resolution of the tension resulting from that polarity' (Weiser 1962:817).

D   IMAGE SCHEMAS IN COGNITIVE LINGUISTICS[18]

Johnson (1987:xiv, xvi) defines an image schema as a 'recurring dynamic pattern of our perceptual interactions and motor programs that gives coherence and structure to our experience …'.[19]   These schemas are directly meaningful ('experiential'/'embodied') structures, which arise from, or are grounded in, our recurrent bodily movements through space, perceptual interactions, and ways of manipulating objects (Hampe 2005:1). The notion of image schemas stems from the realization that the human mind is embodied, that is, our meaning, thought and symbolic expressions are grounded in patterns of perception and bodily movement (cf. Johnson 2005:18). Image schematic reasoning is re-created by the body as people continuously engage in sensorimotor behaviours related to *balance, resistence, source-path-goal, containment,* etc. (Gibbs 2005:116).[20]   Even though scholarly opinion varies on the number of identifiable image schemas, there is consensus on the importance and pervasiveness of the *container* image schema in everyday conceptualisation and reasoning. This can be attributed to the fact that we constantly interact with containers of all shapes and sizes and as a result naturally acquire the 'logic' of containment.

The *container* image schema operates beneath the level of our conscious awareness, that is, humans will share a general understanding of what it means for something to be located within a container, and will understand at least part of this without having to reflect upon it or think about it. Seeing a container (or hearing or reading the word in a particular context) will activate the *container* schema as central to our understanding. The bodily container is concrete, physical, and therefore the basis for a *container* image schema (cf. Johnson 1987:271, 276). This particular schema structures our regular recurring experiences of putting objects into and taking them out of a bounded area. We can experience this pattern in the tactile perceptual modality with physical containers, or we can experience this perceptual pattern visually as we track the

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[18]   Cognitive linguistics is 'the linguistic theory that posits that every linguistic feature, how formal it may be, should be understood against the background of human cognition' (Van Hecke 2005:218). This discipline regards language as a fundamental aspect of human cognition. According to Langacker (1987:12) 'An account of linguistic should … articulate with what is known about cognitive processing in general …'.

[19]   Grady (2005:35) calls attention to the importance of image schemas in cognitive linguistics when he writes, 'Image schemas are among the central conceptual pillars of cognitive linguistics … because so many scholars have been drawn to them as intuitive and powerful instruments for analyzing the nature of thought and language'.

[20]   It is important to keep in mind that image schemas can be structures (e.g. *containers, paths, links, forces, balance,* etc.) and orientations and relations (e.g. *up-down, front-back; in-out; near-far; part-whole,* etc.) (cf. Lakoff 1987:267).

movement of some object into or out of some bounded area or container (Rohrer 2005:166).

At this point, suffice it to note that metaphor is based on image schema. This notion implies that the *container* image schema structures the metaphorical language employed to reason about our embodied experience of being in containers or the body acting as a container. As Johnson (2005:27) aptly observes 'Image schemas analysis gives us some of the most important precise details of the semantics of terms and expressions in natural language …and when coupled with metaphor analysis, it takes us a long way toward understanding abstract inferential structure'.[21] Furthermore, our construal of events, based on our embodied understandings, plays an important role in the processing of linguistic expressions (cf. Gibbs 2005:121).[22] Bodily experiences partly structure the source domains for several important conceptual metaphors. In the ensuing part of this paper, it will be argued that in Psalm 142 the supplicant unconsciously and automatically utilises the structural elements of the *container* schema to conceptualise and reason about his abstract experience of being entangled and incarcerated.

E   THE CONTAINER AND PATH IMAGE SCHEMAS IN PSALM 142

Due to malevolence of the wicked, the psalmist's life has become a prison that represents a state of distress and disequilibrium. In addition, the allusions to hidden snare (פח; v. 4) and prison (סגר; v. 8) as representations of the abode of dead signify separation from Yahweh and the religious community and encapsulate the psalmist's experience of confinement and a reduced quality of life (cf. Keel 1972:62).[23] From the supplicant's vantage point, order has been replaced by chaos and he therefore desires an imminent rescue from enclosure and a potentially life threatening situation. Thus implied in the complaint about the hidden snare is the desire to be safeguarded from it. Snares cause anxiety because, 'Wo sie sichtbar werden, verbreiten sie Unsicherheit, Angst und plötzliches unentrinnbares Verhängnis' (Keel 1972:78; cf. also Ruppert 1973:154; Riede 2000:387).[24] Given the gravity of the current situation, the

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[21]   Image schemas underlie many metaphorical concepts related to our understanding of linguistic action (Gibbs 2005:123).

[22]   They connect the domain of embodied action and the domain of linguistic action (Gibbs 2005:123).

[23]   The imagery of the snare accentuates '… die Enge und Verlorenheit, die den Israeliten jederzeit und überall bedrängten und zu Jahwe hindrängten, der angesichts solcher Bedrohungen allein festen Halt gewähren konnte' (Keel 1972:63).

[24]   Compare also the remark of Westermann (1984:84) in this regard '… bedroht fühlen sich die Klagenden aber durch Gefahren für ihr Leben, die sie nicht sehen und vor denen sie gerade deswegen immer in Angst sein müssen. Diese unsichtbaren Gefahren werden mit Grube, Netz, Schlinge, Falle verglichen'.

references to Yahweh as refuge (v. 6) and the embrace of the righteous (v. 8) should counter the psalmist's experience of loneliness and rejection (v. 5). Whereas vv. 4 and 8 foreground the negative connotations of the *container* image schema, v. 6 accentuates the positive associations thereof. Refuge emphasises the royal role of God who intends making the world a refuge and provides protection to those in distress (Brown 2002:30). Furthermore, it speaks of Yahweh's '… unbezwingbarer Stärke und seiner einzigartigen Machtfülle … die sein Volk und jeder einzelne als Hilfe, Errettung und göttlichen Beistand erfahren hat und immer neu zu erleben hofft' (Zobel 1984:1026).

As far as the cognitive utilisation of the *container* image schema in Psalm 142 is concerned, the following point needs to be stressed. Even though there is no indication that the supplicant became entangled in a snare, one could argue that his body logic of being in a container involves inferences about containment, limited space, boundary, interiors and exteriors, thus providing the underlying structure for the metaphorical allusions to snare and prison. Moreover, the *container* image schema provides the structure for the psalmist's experience of affliction. The embodied knowledge grounded in the recurring experience of containment underlies the complaint about the hidden snare in his path and the desire to be led out of prison. One should note that *container* is image schematic because boundedness is a property found in a large number of experiential domains, which in turn would have afforded the poet the opportunity to conceptualize and reason about the abstract domain of containment in terms of this particular image schema. The notion of containment is further elaborated through the psalmist's reference to the embrace of the religious community in v. 8. The community becomes the spatial centre, harmonious and salutary, where life in its entirety can be experienced. The importance of communal ties in ancient Israel is underscored by the remark of Goeke (1971:27) 'Die mitmenschliche Gemeinschaft in Familie, Freundschaft und Gemeinschaft des Volkes bedeutet dem Hebräer ein Höchstmaß an Lebenserfüllung, ja die Gemeinschaft ist Erfahrung des Lebens selbst. So bedeutet der Verlust der mitmenschlichen Gemeinschaft, die Einsamkeit, dem Hebräer das Unglück'.

It is argued that the poet combines the *container* schema with the *path* image schema to conceptualise and reason about his bodily experience of containment and motion along a path. On his path, the supplicant has to deal with enemies, who are ever poised to ambush him (cf. Brown 2002:36). The fact that walking or journeying entails purposeful action allows the psalmist to portray the direction and orientation of his life as a path (cf. Ryken *et al.* 1998:630). According to Brown (2002:38) 'The metaphor of the 'pathway' lends itself to conveying the struggles the pray-er faces within a world ravaged by chaos in all its manifestations as he or she seeks a way *through* (original emphasis), as well as a way *out* (original emphasis), a way to preserve one's

dignity, hope, sanity, and even one's life amid demoralizing and debilitating forces'. As an image schema with a firm experiential grounding, the *path* image schema provides the underlying structure for the metaphor of the way in Psalm 142 (cf. vv. 4, 7, 8). This concurs with the notion of Johnson (2005:21) that a great deal of our knowledge about image schemas comes from linguistic analyses of their role in the semantics of spatial terms and bodily operations. Some motion descriptions specify location by making use of these same schematic structural elements of a landmark, but specify a different temporal order of spatial relations (Dodge & Lakoff 2005:62). The psalmist requests Yahweh to lead him *out of* the prison (v. 8). The supplicant's change in location can be analysed in terms of both the *container* image schema and the *path* image schematic structure: *out of* indicates that the exterior is the goal location, that is, outside of the prison and back into the circle of the righteous. Even though 'prison' may denote actual imprisonment, it seems more likely that the supplicant employed it as a metaphor for his desperate condition in the light of adversity and isolation (cf. VanGemeren 1991:850). The desire to be led out of prison (v. 8) underscores the ancient Israelite notion that 'when the "I" comes into the presence of God at the center, his life gains order and structure. Chaos and death no longer threaten, for the psalmist has been raised up to the creative center' (Thompson 1978:64).

F   CONCLUSION

This paper endeavoured to show how the psalmist's recurring bodily experience of being in a container allows for the image-schematic structuring of references to snare and prison. It was argued that the poet's embodied understanding allows for the utilization of certain structural elements of the *container* image schema to conceptualise and reason about his abstract experience of containment and separation. Furthermore, the contribution highlighted the link between the *container* image schema and the *path* image schema. Through the *path* image schema, the hidden snare, as a symbol of entrapment (container) becomes the metaphorical representation of an impediment on the psalmist's path. In terms of the *path* image schema, the poet expresses his desire for a change in location. Yahweh is implored to *lead* the supplicant *out* of the area of containment (prison) to the circle of the righteous. The image schematic analysis of Psalm 142 has illustrated that even though languages vary in the meanings of their spatial-relations terms cross-linguistic differences could be investigated in terms of combinations of universal schemas: paths, bounded regions, forces of various kinds, together with metaphorical versions of these (cf. Dodge & Lakoff 2005:57).

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