

Listen to the Wisdom of God: A Rhetorical-Relational Analysis of Proverbs 8:4-36 in the Septuagint

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1. Introduction

Proverbs 8:4-36, the speech of personified wisdom, is arguably the most discussed text in the book of Proverbs. Biblical scholars generally interpret the Hebrew text of this passage as that Proverbs 8:4-36 is the self-praise of wisdom, which explains the significance, origin, and authority of wisdom. However, this major view may not necessarily stand when the Greek text of Proverbs 8:4-36 in Septuagint is examined. The translation of Proverbs is highly paraphrastic. The Greek text of this passage may express a different focus from the Hebrew text. In addition, the linguistic features of Proverbs 8:4-36, especially its rhetorical structure, that are essential for the appropriate interpretation of this passage have not been fully assessed in the current biblical scholarship. Therefore, I propose to conduct a rhetorical-relational analysis based on Rhetorical Structure Theory (RST) to identify the core section of Proverbs 8:4-36 in Septuagint, namely the most important message conveyed in this passage. This method provides a framework to assess the linguistic features of the biblical text and may offer new insights into the existing research of Proverbs 8:4-36. According to the rhetorical-relational analysis in this paper, I argue that Proverbs 8:4-36 is an

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appeal, the key message of which is to listen to the wisdom. Those statements explaining the significance, origin, and authority of wisdom are supporting information used to justify the appeal of listening to wisdom.

1. A Survey of Scholarship

As the longest speech of wisdom in the book of Proverbs, Proverbs 8:4-36 has been widely studied by biblical scholars. Most scholars agree that Proverbs 8:4-36 is a poem for a majestic and revealing portrait of personified wisdom. In this poem, wisdom addresses all humankind, assuring her audience that she is trustworthy with truth and knowledge, promising her followers kingship, honor, wealth, and abundant life, and ascribing her authority to her unique relationship with YHWH. That is to say, wisdom praises herself in the first person throughout Proverbs 8:4-36 by articulating her significance, origin, and authority.¹⁾ However, there is no consensus on the structure and background of this passage in contemporary scholarship. Different scholars construct different structures of Proverbs 8:4-36 and utilize different references as the background to understand Proverbs 8:4-36, such as Genesis 1:1-2:4a, Job 28, Psalms 19, Psalms 119, and Sirach 24.²⁾ Since the rhetorical structure helps to understand

1) R. J. Clifford, *Proverbs: A Commentary*, Old Testament Library (Louisville: Westminster, 1999), 93-98; M. V. Fox, *Proverbs 1-9: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible 18A (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 265-295; R. E. Murphy, *Proverbs*, Word Biblical Commentary 22 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 49-55; B. U. Schipper, *Proverbs 1-15: A Commentary on the Book of Proverbs 1:1-15:33*, S. Germany, trans., Hermeneia-A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2019), 284-318; G. Von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, J. D. Martin, trans. (Harrisburg: Trinity, 1993), 144-176; B. K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1-15*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004-2005), 392-426; S. Weeks, *Instruction and Imagery in Proverbs 1-9* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 120-123; R. N. Whybray, *The Book of Proverbs: A Survey of Modern Study*, History of Biblical Interpretation 1 (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 73; A. Wolters, *Proverbs: A Commentary based on Paroimiai in Codex Vaticanus*, Septuagint Commentary (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 392-426; B. K. Zabán, *The Pillar Function of the Speeches of Wisdom: Proverbs 1:20-33, 8:1-36 and 9:1-6 in the Structural Framework of Proverbs 1-9*, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 429 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012), 134.

2) R. J. Clifford, *Proverbs*, 93-98; Michael V. Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 265-95; R. E. Murphy, *Proverbs*, 49-55; B. U. Schipper, *Proverbs 1-15*, 284-318; G. Von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, 144-176; B. K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs*, 392-426; S. Weeks, *Instruction and Imagery in Proverbs 1-9*, 120-123; R. N. Whybray, *The Book of Proverbs*, 73; B. K. Zabán, *The Pillar Function of the*

the meaning of the text in that it demonstrates the text structuring relations which reflect the author's choices of organizing and presenting the text, I conduct a rhetorical-relational analysis based on RST to interpret Proverbs 8:4-36. In this paper, I use a functional linguistic method, which deals with the final form of the Greek text in Septuagint only. Any issues related to the translation, namely the production, of Septuagint text are out of the scope of this study.

2. Methodology

RST was originally developed, independently of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL),³⁾ as a functional theory to describe the text structure of written discourse by William C. Mann and Sandra A. Thompson.⁴⁾ Then this descriptive theory of textual organization was further refined and advanced by

Speeches of Wisdom, 134.

- 3) For the theory of SFL, see M. A. K. Halliday, *Halliday's Introduction to Functional Grammar*, C. M. I. M. Matthiessen, rev., 4th ed. (New York: Routledge, 2014), 30-31; M. A. K. Halliday and R. Hasan, *Language, Context and Text: Aspects of Language in a Social-Semiotic Perspective*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 18-23; C. M. I. M. Matthiessen, K. Teruya, and M. Lam, *Key Terms in Systemic Functional Linguistics*, Key Terms Series (London: Continuum, 2010), 115, 126, 138, 220-221; S. E. Porter, "Discourse Analysis and New Testament Studies: An Introductory Survey", S. E. Porter and D. A. Carson, eds., *Discourse Analysis and Other Topics in Biblical Greek*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 113 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1995), 27-28.
- 4) Although RST was primarily developed for analyzing written texts, it has also been applied in the analysis of dialogues. However, Martin criticizes this practice since the deep structural embeddings required by RST do not align with the clause combining types in spontaneous speech. For the application of RST to dialogues, see R. P. Fawcett and B. L. Davies, "Monologue as a Turn in Dialogue: Towards an Integration of Exchange Structure Theory and Rhetorical Structure Theory", R. Dale, et al., eds., *Aspects of Automated Natural Language Generation: 6th International Workshop on Natural Language Generation, Trento, Italy, April 5-7, 1992, Proceedings*, Lecture Notes in Computer Science 587 (Berlin: Springer-Verlag, 1992), 151-166; E. Maier and S. Sitter, "An Extension of Rhetorical Structure Theory for the Treatment of Retrieval Dialogues", *Proceedings of the Fourteenth Annual Conference of the Cognitive Science Society* (Bloomington: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1992), 968-973; T. Daradoumis and M. F. Verdejo, "Using Rhetorical Relations in Building a Coherent Conversational Teaching Session", R.-J. Beun, M. Baker, and M. Reiner, eds., *Dialogue and Instruction: Modelling Interaction in Intelligent Tutoring Systems*, NATO ASI Series F, Computer and Systems Sciences 142 (Berlin: Springer, 1995), 56-71; For Martin's criticism, see J. R. Martin, *English Text: System and Structure*, (Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1992); J. Bateman and J. Delin, "Rhetorical Structure Theory", K. Brown, ed., *Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics*, 2nd ed., vol. 12 (Boston: Elsevier, 2006), 591.

Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen.⁵⁾ Due to the similar theoretical foundations of RST and SFL,⁶⁾ Matthiessen endeavors to incorporate RST into the framework of SFL.⁷⁾ Recently, Bo Wang and Yuanyi Ma, Matthiessen's students, have attempted to link RST with the various dimensions of SFL, including metafunction, stratification, and instantiation.⁸⁾ In the current stage, scholars dispute whether the rhetorical structure should belong in logical, interpersonal, or textual semantic systems.⁹⁾

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- 5) W. C. Mann and S. A. Thompson, "Rhetorical Structure Theory: Toward a Functional Theory of Text Organization", *Text* 8 (1988) 243-244; W. C. Mann, et al., "Rhetorical Structure Theory and Text Analysis", W. C. Mann and S. A. Thompson, eds., *Discourse Description: Diverse Linguistic Analyses of a Fund-raising Text*, Pragmatics & Beyond 16 (Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1992), 42.
- 6) RST has been developed independently of Halliday's clause complexing theory, but both accounts assume the same kind of relational organization, which evolved from the approaches of Joseph E. Grimes and Robert E. Longacre for discourse analysis. The general principle of this assumption is that the text is organized as rhetorical complexes at the semantic stratum. In other words, passages are linked through rhetorical relations, such as projection and expansion, and within each of these passages, clause complexes and clauses are linked through rhetorical relations as well. Because of this kind of relational organization, RST, and also Halliday's clause complexing theory, can be used to interpret the text by examining its rhetorical structure. For Grimes and Longacre's discourse analysis approaches, see J. E. Grimes, *The Thread of Discourse*, Janua Linguarum 207 (Hague: Mouton, 1975); R. E. Longacre, "Sentence Structure as a Statement Calculus", *Language* 46 (1970), 783-815; R. E. Longacre, *An Anatomy of Speech Notions*, Peter de Ridder Press Publications in Tagmemics 3 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1976); C. M. I. M. Matthiessen, "Combining Clauses into Clause Complexes: A Multi-faceted View", J. Bybee and M. Noonan, eds., *Complex Sentences in Grammar and Discourse: Essays in Honor of Sandra A. Thompson* (Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2002), 281-282.
- 7) M. A. K. Halliday, *Halliday's Introduction to Functional Grammar*, 44, 609; C. M. I. M. Matthiessen, *System in Systemic Functional Linguistics: A System-based Theory of Language*, Key Concepts in Systemic Functional Linguistics (Sheffield: Equinox, 2023).
- 8) B. Wang and Y. Ma, *Rhetorical Structure Theory and Its Applications: Past, Present and Future*, Key Concepts in Systemic Functional Linguistics (Sheffield: Equinox, forthcoming).
- 9) Halliday proposes that the rhetorical structure is part of the textual semantic system. Initially following Halliday's perspective, Matthiessen justifies rhetorical relations within the textual semantic system by means of RST. However, Matthiessen changes his view later and classifies the rhetorical structure into the logical semantic system. Stanley E. Porter suggests that rhetorical structure fits the interpersonal semantic system because rhetoric seems to deal with participant relationships. For Halliday's view, see M. A. K. Halliday, *Language as Social Semiotic: The Social Interpretation of Language and Meaning* (Baltimore: University Park, 1978), 223; M. A. K. Halliday and R. Hasan, *Language, Context and Text*, 12; For Matthiessen's view, see C. M. I. M. Matthiessen, "Interpreting the Textual Metafunction", M. Davies and L. Ravelli, eds., *Advances in Systemic Linguistics: Recent Theory and Practice*, Open Linguistics (London: Pinter, 1992), 61-62, 71-72; C. M. I. M. Matthiessen, K. Teruya, and M. Lam, *Key Terms in Systemic Functional Linguistics*, 185; M. A. K. Halliday, *Halliday's Introduction to Functional Grammar*, 609; C. M. I. M. Matthiessen, *System in Systemic Functional Linguistics*; For Porter's view, see S. E. Porter, "Dialect and Register in the Greek of the New Testament: Theory", M. D.

Nevertheless, no matter which semantic system the rhetorical structure belongs in, RST is actually associated with all three metafunctions, namely ideational, interpersonal, and textual metafunctions. The research of Mann and Thompson affirms that rhetorical relations have a diverse range of effects on all three metafunctions, which are ideational or argumentation effects, interpersonal or social effects, and textual or presentational effects.¹⁰⁾ Wang and Ma also acknowledge that RST is closely related to all three metafunctions.¹¹⁾ Therefore, the rhetorical-relational analysis based on RST can be combined with the theory of SFL for a more comprehensive interpretation of the text.¹²⁾

RST indicates that a text is hierarchically organized by text spans which range from the text as a whole down to the individual constituent clause. Within this hierarchical organization, the text as a whole is the semantic unit at the top of the hierarchy and the individual constituent clause is the most basic lexicogrammatical unit at the bottom of the hierarchy. As functionally significant parts, the text spans together constitute the rhetorical structure of the text, with each text span contributing to the overall meaning of the text. The term nucleus refers to those text spans that play “a more significant role as part of the core meaning of the text,” whereas the term satellite refers to those text spans that are “more peripheral to the overall meaning of the text.” Each text span is related to another text span as intended by the author. The relations between text spans hold the text together and contribute to the overall coherence of the text. In other words, these relations not only function at the clause level but also apply to the larger units further up the hierarchy. Each relation is defined by constraints on the nucleus and satellites(s) of a text span and by the intended effect of the author on the reader.¹³⁾

Carroll R., ed., *Rethinking Contexts, Rereading Texts: Contributions from the Social Sciences to Biblical Interpretation*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 299 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2000), 203-204.

10) W. C. Mann and S. A. Thompson, “Rhetorical Structure Theory”, 250.

11) B. Wang and Y. Ma, *Rhetorical Structure Theory and Its Applications*.

12) For detailed discussions about the development and application of RST and the incorporation of RST into the framework of SFL, see Y. Ma, “A Methodological Proposal for New Testament Discourse Analysis: Rhetorical Structure Theory and its Application to John 8:31-59”, *Biblical and Ancient Greek Linguistics* 11 (2022-23), 5-36.

13) W. C. Mann and S. A. Thompson, “Rhetorical Structure Theory”, 245; W. C. Mann, et al., “Rhetorical Structure Theory and Text Analysis”, 47-48; M. A. K. Halliday and J. J. Webster, *Text Linguistics: The How and Why of Meaning*, Equinox Textbooks and Surveys in Linguistics (Sheffield: Equinox, 2014), 198-199, 207-208.

RST uses the notion of rhetorical structure in the sense that the text structuring relations reflect the author's choices of organizing and presenting the text.¹⁴⁾ There are two major types of relations between text spans, namely the asymmetrical (hypotactic) and symmetrical (paratactic) relations. The asymmetrical relation has one text span as the nucleus and the other text span as the satellite, while the symmetrical relation has both text spans as the nucleus.¹⁵⁾ In general, RST involves two steps in the process of interpreting a text. The first step is to divide the text into text spans, the size of which can be individual clauses or larger units depending on the purpose of the analysis. The second step is to identify the rhetorical structure of the text by describing the rhetorical relations between individual text spans either from the top down or from the bottom up, with the reference to the definitions of RST relations.¹⁶⁾ RST provides a linguistic framework for describing the text structure of written discourse according to the rhetorical relations among text spans, paying particular attention to the way that a text is structured so as to be accepted and understood by the readers.¹⁷⁾

This rhetorical-relational analysis based on RST has been introduced to New Testament discourse analysis and adapted for New Testament interpretations by integrating the particular features of the Greek language.¹⁸⁾ Within this methodological framework, the biblical text can be analyzed at the clause level and above, which allows for a broader examination at higher levels of discourse. According to the rhetorical structure as intended by the author, the way that each text span contributes to the flow of information at the discourse level can be demonstrated. The strength of this methodological framework is its capability to assess the various linguistic features of the biblical text in terms of both the

14) The notion of rhetoric in RST must be distinguished from that in classical rhetoric or other text theory. See C. Ilie, "Rhetoric, Classical", K. Brown, ed., *Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics*, 2nd ed., vol. 12 (Boston: Elsevier, 2006), 573-579; J. J. Murphy, "Rhetoric: History", K. Brown, ed., *Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics*, 2nd ed., vol. 12 (Boston: Elsevier, 2006), 579-582; M. Lotman, "Rhetoric: Semiotic Approaches", K. Brown, ed., *Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics*, 2nd ed., vol. 12 (Boston: Elsevier, 2006), 582-589.

15) W. C. Mann, et al., "Rhetorical Structure Theory and Text Analysis", 44-45; M. A. K. Halliday and J. J. Webster, *Text Linguistics*, 198-199.

16) W. C. Mann and S. A. Thompson, "Rhetorical Structure Theory", 248-249; W. C. Mann, et al., "Rhetorical Structure Theory and Text Analysis", 51-53.

17) W. C. Mann and S. A. Thompson, "Rhetorical Structure Theory", 243-244; W. C. Mann, et al., "Rhetorical Structure Theory and Text Analysis", 42, 46-47; M. A. K. Halliday and W. J. Webster, *Text Linguistics*, 208.

18) Y. Ma, "A Methodological Proposal for New Testament Discourse Analysis", 5-36.

lexical and grammatical elements, and then from the outcome of such assessment determine the important evidence for the meaning of the text and the intention of the author. This capability is essential for the appropriate interpretation of the biblical text.

3. Rhetorical-Relational Analysis of Proverbs 8:4-36

In this section, I apply RST to the Greek text of Proverbs 8:4-36 in the Septuagint to identify its core section, namely the most important message conveyed in this passage, and accordingly interpret the meaning of Proverbs 8:4-36.¹⁹⁾ First, Proverbs 8:4-36 as a discourse unit is ascertained by identifying the discourse boundary using various boundary markers, including connective word, temporal expression, locative expression, participant switch, shift in verb tense-forms, and circumstance change.²⁰⁾ Second, the text of Proverbs 8:4-36 is divided into text spans in accordance with the main clause. Third, the rhetorical relations between individual text spans in Proverbs 8:4-36 are described from the top down, with reference to the definitions of RST relations.²¹⁾ The explicit rhetorical relations are identified on the basis of the Greek conjunctions that connect the text spans. The implicit rhetorical relations are identified in light of

19) *Septuaginta* is used for the Greek text of Septuagint. All English translations from Greek are my own.

20) Porter identifies shift in grammatical person, shift in verb tense-forms, connective word (e.g. *ἀλλά*, *γάρ*, *δέ*, *καί*, *οὖν*, and *τότε*), and time word (e.g. *μετά*, *νύν*, *νύνη*, *ότε*, *πρίν*, *πρὸ*, and *πρότερος*) as boundary markers of discourse. Drawing from the theory of the narrative analysis, Longacre identifies temporal expression, locative expression, circumstance change, and participant switch as transition markers of episode. Given the genre of the Gospel of John can be classified as narrative, these transition markers of episode will also be used to identify discourse boundaries. There is overlap between Porter's boundary markers of discourse and Longacre's transition markers of episode. Temporal expression includes time word and other indications of time. Participant switch can be indicated by shift in grammatical person or the change of names, designations, and pronouns. Therefore, this study will adopt connective word, temporal expression, locative expression, participant switch, shift in verb tense-forms, and circumstance change as boundary markers. See R. E. Longacre, "A Top-Down, Template-Driven Narrative Analysis, Illustrated by Application to Mark's Gospel", S. E. Porter and J. T. Reed, eds., *Discourse Analysis and the New Testament: Approaches and Results*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 170 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 145; S. E. Porter, *Idioms of the Greek New Testament*, Biblical Languages Greek 2, 2nd ed. (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1994), 301.

21) For the definitions of all RST relations, see M. A. K. Halliday and J. J. Webster, *Text Linguistics*, 209-212.

the subject matter and lexical cohesion of the text spans, which are determined by examining the relevant linguistic components under the three metafunctions. Fourth, the rhetorical structure of Proverbs 8:4-36 intended by the author is constructed according to the rhetorical relations between individual text spans. Fifth, the meaning of Proverbs 8:4-36 is interpreted based on this rhetorical-relational analysis.

3.1. Discourse Boundary

Proverbs 8:1-3 is the narrative, whereas Proverbs 8:4-36 is the speech of wisdom. This shift to the embedded speech at the beginning of Proverbs 8:4 from the narrative in Proverbs 8:1-3 signifies a circumstance change. These markers demonstrate that Proverbs 8:4 introduces a discourse unit. Proverbs 8:36 ends wisdom's speech that starts from Proverbs 8:4. The shift from wisdom's speech in Proverbs 8:36 to her actions in Proverbs 9:1 also represents a circumstance change. These markers demonstrate that Proverbs 8:36 closes a discourse unit. Therefore, Proverbs 8:4-36 constitutes a discourse unit, the rhetorical structure of which will be examined in the following rhetorical-relational analysis.

3.2. Text Span

Text span is a chunk of text, of which the whole text is composed. The size of a text span can be individual clauses, sentences, or discourse units depending on the purpose of the analysis. This study conducts the rhetorical-relational analysis to the sentence level and accordingly divides the text of Proverbs 8:4-36 based on the main clauses in the embedded speech into 28 text spans, which are (1) Pro 8:4, (2) Pro 8:5, (3) Pro 8:6a, (4) Pro 8:6b-7, (5) Pro 8:8, (6) Pro 8:9, (7) Pro 8:10, (8) Pro 8:11, (9) Pro 8:12, (10) Pro 8:13a, (11) Pro 8:13b, (12) Pro 8:14, (13) Pro 8:15, (14) Pro 8:16, (15) Pro 8:17, (16) Pro 8:18, (17) Pro 8:19, (18) Pro 8:20-21, (19) Pro 8:21a, (20) Pro 8:22-25, (21) Pro 8:26, (22) Pro 8:27, (23) Pro 8:28-30a, (24) Pro 8:30b-31, (25) Pro 8:32, (26) Pro 8:34, (27) Pro 8:35, and (28) Pro 8:36. The divided text of Proverbs 8:4-36 is presented below.

- (1) 4 Ὑμᾶς, ὧ ἄνθρωποι παρακαλῶ καὶ προίεμαι ἐμὴν φωνὴν υἱοῖς ἀνθρώπων·
- (2) 5 νοήσατε, ἄκακοι, πανουργίαν, οἱ δὲ ἀπαίδευτοι, ἔνθεσθε καρδίαν.
- (3) 6 εἰσακούσατέ μου,
- (4) 7 σεμνὰ γὰρ ἔρω καὶ ἀνοίσω ἀπὸ χειλέων ὀρθά· 7 ὅτι ἀλήθειαν μελετήσῃ ὁ φάρυγξ μου ἐβδελυγμένα δὲ ἐναντίον ἐμοῦ χεῖλη ψευδοῦ.
- (5) 8 μετὰ δικαιοσύνης πάντα τὰ ῥήματα τοῦ στόματός μου, οὐδὲν ἐν αὐτοῖς σκολιὸν οὐδὲ στραγγαλιῶδες·
- (6) 9 πάντα ἐνώπια τοῖς συνιοῦσιν καὶ ὀρθὰ τοῖς εὐρίσκουσι γινῶσιν.
- (7) 10 λάβετε παιδείαν καὶ μὴ ἀργύριον καὶ γινῶσιν ὑπὲρ χρυσοῦν δεδοκιμασμένον, ἀνθαιρέισθε δὲ αἴσθησιν χρυσοῦ καθαροῦ·
- (8) 11 κρείσσων γὰρ σοφία λίθων πολυτελέων, πᾶν δὲ τίμιον οὐκ ἄξιον αὐτῆς ἐστίν.
- (9) 12 ἐγὼ ἢ σοφία κατεσκήνωσα βουλήν, καὶ γινῶσιν καὶ ἔννοιαν ἐγὼ ἐπεκαλεσάμην.
- (10) 13 φόβος κυρίου μισεῖ ἀδικίαν, ὕβριν τε καὶ ὑπερηφανίαν καὶ ὁδοὺς ποιηρῶν·
- (11) 14 μεμίσηκα δὲ ἐγὼ διεστραμμένας ὁδοὺς κακῶν.
- (12) 15 ἐμὴ βουλή καὶ ἀσφάλεια, ἐμὴ φρόνησις, ἐμὴ δὲ ἰσχὺς·
- (13) 16 δι' ἐμοῦ βασιλεῖς βασιλεύουσιν, καὶ οἱ δυνάσται γράφουσιν δικαιοσύνην·
- (14) 17 δι' ἐμοῦ μεγαλύνονται, καὶ τύραννοι δι' ἐμοῦ κρατοῦσι γῆς.
- (15) 18 ἐγὼ τοὺς ἐμὲ φιλοῦντας ἀγαπῶ, οἱ δὲ ἐμὲ ζητοῦντες εὐρήσουσιν.
- (16) 19 πλοῦτος καὶ δόξα ἐμοὶ ὑπάρχει καὶ κτήσις πολλῶν καὶ δικαιοσύνη·
- (17) 20 βέλτιον ἐμὲ καρπίζεσθαι ὑπὲρ χρυσοῦν καὶ λίθον τίμιον, τὰ δὲ ἐμὰ γενήματα κρείσσω ἀργυρίου ἐκλεκτοῦ.
- (18) 21 ἐν ὁδοῖς δικαιοσύνης περιπατῶ καὶ ἀνὰ μέσον τριβῶν δικαιοῦματος ἀναστρέφομαι, 22 ἵνα μερίσω τοῖς ἐμὲ ἀγαπῶσιν ὑπάρξιν καὶ τοὺς θησαυροὺς αὐτῶν ἐμπλήσω ἀγαθῶν.
- (19) 23 ἐάν ἀναγγείλω ὑμῖν τὰ καθ' ἡμέραν γινόμενα, μνημονεύσω τὰ ἐξ αἰῶνος ἀριθμησαί.
- (20) 24 κύριος ἔκτισέν με ἀρχὴν ὁδῶν αὐτοῦ εἰς ἔργα αὐτοῦ, 25 πρὸ τοῦ αἰῶνος ἔθεμελίωσέν με ἐν ἀρχῇ, 26 πρὸ τοῦ τὴν γῆν ποιῆσαι καὶ πρὸ τοῦ τὰς ἀβύσσους ποιῆσαι, πρὸ τοῦ προελθεῖν

- τὰς πηγὰς τῶν ὑδάτων, 25 πρὸ τοῦ ὄρη ἔδρασθηναί, πρὸ δὲ πάντων βουνῶν γεννᾷ με.
- (21) 26 κύριος ἐποίησεν χώρας καὶ ἀοικήτους καὶ ἄκρα οἰκούμενα τῆς ὑπ' οὐρανόν.
- (22) 27 ἠνίκα ἠτοίμαζεν τὸν οὐρανόν, συμπαρήμην αὐτῷ, καὶ ὅτε ἀφώριζεν τὸν ἑαυτοῦ θρόνον ἐπ' ἀνέμων.
- (23) 28 ἠνίκα ἰσχυρὰ ἐποίει τὰ ἄνω νέφη, καὶ ὡς ἀσφαλεῖς ἐτίθει πηγὰς τῆς ὑπ' οὐρανόν 29 καὶ ἰσχυρὰ ἐποίει τὰ θεμέλια τῆς γῆς, 30 ἤμην παρ' αὐτῷ ἀρμόζουσα, ἐγὼ ἤμην ἢ προσέχαιρειν.
- (24) καθ' ἡμέραν δὲ εὐφραίνομην ἐν προσώπῳ αὐτοῦ ἐν παντὶ καιρῷ, 31 ὅτε εὐφραίνετο τὴν οἰκουμένην συντελέσας καὶ ἐνευφραίνετο ἐν υἱοῖς ἀνθρώπων.
- (25) 32 νῦν οἶν, υἱέ, ἄκουέ μου.
- (26) 34 μακάριος ἀνὴρ, ὃς εἰσακούσεται μου, καὶ ἄνθρωπος, ὃς τὰς ἐμὰς ὁδοὺς φυλάξει ἀγρυπνῶν ἐπ' ἐμαῖς θύραις καθ' ἡμέραν τηρῶν σταθμοὺς ἐμῶν εἰσόδων.
- (27) 35 αἰ γὰρ ἕξοδοί μου ἕξοδοι ζωῆς, καὶ ἐτοιμάζεται θέλησις παρὰ κυρίου.
- (28) 36 οἱ δὲ εἰς ἐμὲ ἀμαρτάνοντες ἀσεβοῦσιν τὰς ἑαυτῶν ψυχὰς, καὶ οἱ μισοῦντές με ἀγαπῶσιν θάνατον.

3.3. Rhetorical Relation

The subject matter of Proverbs 8:4-36 can be recognized by inspecting the lexical choice of various semantic domains and grammatical elements under the ideational metafunction.²²⁾ The words from domain 13 “Be, Become, Exist, Happen,” domain 1 “Geographical Objects and Features,” domain 25 “Attitudes and Emotions,” domain 67 “Time,” and domain 33 “Communication” are the most frequently used in Proverbs 8:4-36.²³⁾ This discourse unit seems to be the communication about the changes in attitudes. The subject matter of Proverbs

22) In this study, the analysis of semantic domains does not include domain 92 “Discourse Referentials,” domain 91 “Discourse Markers,” domain 89 “Relations,” and domain 69 “Affirmation, Negation,” which mainly involve functional words. Semantic domains, conjunctions, and particles are analyzed with reference to Louw and Nida’s *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*. J. P. Louw and E. A. Nida, eds., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*, 2 vols., 2nd ed. (New York: United Bible, 1989).

23) For detailed analysis, see Appendix 1 “Semantic Domains in Pro 8:4-36.”

8:4-36 can be further clarified with the help of the participant structure of the text by observing the specification of participants and the grammatical persons of the Greek verbs under the interpersonal metafunction. This discourse unit is the speech of wisdom, which has two categories of participants. Wisdom, as the speaker, is the sole major participant. YHWH and wisdom's audience are the secondary participants, being invoked within the speech of wisdom. The author underlines wisdom's role as a participant. Therefore, the subject matter of Proverbs 8:4-36 is most likely wisdom's communication with her audience about the changes in their attitudes.

In Proverbs 8:32-36, all three verbs in the main clauses, namely ἄκουε (“to listen”) in Proverbs 8:32, ἐτοιμάζεται (“to prepare”) in Proverbs 8:35, and ἀσεβοῦσιν (“to act profanely”) in Proverbs 8:36, use the present tense. For exposition, the present tense as the foreground tense form and the perfect tense as the frontground tense form mark prominent features, while the aorist tense as the background tense is used for supporting illustrative material.²⁴⁾ That is to say, Proverbs 8:32-36 is highlighted by the marked imperfective aspect using the present tense, which serves as prominent material within the entire discourse unit and indicates the author's point of emphasis. The verb ἄκουε (“to listen”) in Proverbs 8:32 uses the present tense and the imperative mood. The imperative mood form is the most common means to form a command or request and is normally employed for the author's intent to direct the readers' action. The present imperative may be used to direct certain actions to begin.²⁵⁾ In general, it is unnecessary to express the subject of imperative mood. The subject υἱέ (“son”) of the verb ἄκουε (“to listen”) expressed in Proverbs 8:32 not only adds specification but also signifies the prominence.²⁶⁾ Furthermore, the conjunction οὖν in Proverbs 8:32 is used for its inferential sense and acts as a marker of result, which often implies the conclusion of a reasoning process.²⁷⁾ In other words, Proverbs 8:32-36 concludes the process of reasoning in Proverbs 8:4-31. Proverbs 8:32-36 explicitly conveys wisdom's request for her audience to listen to her, which represents the subject matter of the entire discourse unit. As all

24) S. E. Porter, *Idioms of the Greek New Testament*, 302.

25) *Ibid.*, 53-54.

26) *Ibid.*, 221.

27) J. P. Louw and E. A. Nida, eds., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 782; S. E. Porter, *Idioms of the Greek New Testament*, 214.

these elements demonstrate, Proverbs 8:32-36 plays a more significant role for the core meaning of Proverbs 8:4-36 and thus is the nucleus. Proverbs 8:4-31 is more peripheral to the overall meaning of Proverbs 8:4-36 and thus is the satellite. The rhetorical relation between Proverbs 8:4-31 and Proverbs 8:32-36 can be defined as “Motivation.” The readers’ comprehension of Proverbs 8:4-31 increases their desire to perform the action requested in Proverbs 8:32-36, namely listening to wisdom.²⁸⁾

Within Proverbs 8:32-36, Proverbs 8:32 is the request of wisdom urging her audience to listen to her, while Proverbs 8:34-36 further elaborates this request. Proverbs 8:32 is the nucleus and Proverbs 8:34-36 is the satellite, the rhetorical relation between which may be defined as “Elaboration.” That is to say, Proverbs 8:32 provides a generalization of wisdom’s request, and then Proverbs 8:34-36 offers specific details about the request.²⁹⁾ Within Proverbs 8:34-36, wisdom describes two groups of people who respond differently to her request, which incurs different results. Those who listen to wisdom as stated in Proverbs 8:34-35 are happy, whereas those who sin against and hate wisdom as stated in Proverbs 8:36 act profanely towards their own souls and love death. In Proverbs 8:36, the conjunction *de.*, a marker of contrast, suggests a contrast between these two groups of people.³⁰⁾ Because the contrast between Proverbs 8:34-35 and Proverbs 8:36 is incompatible, the rhetorical relation between them should be defined as “Antithesis.” Proverbs 8:34-35 is the nucleus and Proverbs 8:36 is the satellite. The readers cannot have positive regard for both situations, but their comprehension of the latter and of the incompatible contrast between the two situations increases their positive regard for the former.³¹⁾ Within Proverbs 8:34-35, wisdom legitimizes her description of the people who listen to her in Proverbs 8:34 with the fact that her courses are the courses of life and favor is prepared from the Lord in Proverbs 8:35. The conjunction *γὰρ* in Proverbs 8:35 is a marker of cause or reason between events and has an explanatory sense in this verse.³²⁾ The readers’ comprehension of Proverbs 8:35 increases their readiness to accept the legitimacy

28) For the definition of “Motivation,” see Appendix 2 “Definitions of Presentational Relations.”

29) For the definition of “Elaboration,” see Appendix 3 “Definitions of Subject Matter Relations.”

30) J. P. Louw and E. A. Nida, eds., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 793; S. E. Porter, *Idioms of the Greek New Testament*, 208.

31) For the definition of “Antithesis,” see Appendix 2 “Definitions of Presentational Relations.”

32) J. P. Louw and E. A. Nida, eds., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 779; S. E. Porter, *Idioms of the Greek New Testament*, 207.

of Proverbs 8:34. Proverbs 8:34 as the nucleus and Proverbs 8:35 as the satellite have the “Justify” rhetorical relation between them.³³⁾

Within Proverbs 8:4-31, wisdom’s exhortation to her audience to listen to her in Proverbs 8:4-6a is endorsed by her attributes expounded in Proverbs 8:6b-31. In Proverbs 8:6b, the conjunction γὰρ as a marker of cause or reason between events is used for its inferential sense.³⁴⁾ The readers’ comprehension of wisdom’s attributes helps to enhance their desire to perform according to her exhortation. Proverbs 8:4-6a is the nucleus and Proverbs 8:6b-31 is the satellite, the rhetorical relation between which must be defined as “Motivation.”³⁵⁾ Within Proverbs 8:4-6a, Proverbs 8:4-5 presents wisdom’s call to her audience, which prepares for her exhortation to listen to her in Proverbs 8:6a. Proverbs 8:6a is the nucleus and Proverbs 8:4-5 is the satellite, with the “Preparation” rhetorical relation between them. The latter precedes the former in the text and tends to make the readers more ready or oriented for the former.³⁶⁾ It is worth noting that the verb εἰσακούσατέ (“to listen”) in Proverbs 8:6a uses the aorist tense and the imperative mood. The aorist imperative is probably utilized to summarize the following specifying or particularizing present imperatives.³⁷⁾ This directive statement in Proverbs 8:6a does not express the subject of the verb εἰσακούσατέ (“to listen”), indicating neither specification nor prominence. Within Proverbs 8:4-5, wisdom first summons her audience in Proverbs 8:4 and then clarifies that she utters her voice in order for naive people to perceive cunning and foolish people to take it to heart in Proverbs 8:5. In other words, the activity in Proverbs 8:4, as the nucleus, must be initiated in order to realize the situation in Proverbs 8:5, as the satellite. The rhetorical relation between these two sections can be defined as “Purpose.”³⁸⁾

Within Proverbs 8:6b-31, Proverbs 8:6b-8 contains wisdom’s declaration that her words are with truth and righteousness, the legitimacy of which is proved in Proverbs 8:9-31 by her characteristics and relationship with YHWH. Proverbs 8:6b-8 is the nucleus and Proverbs 8:9-31 is the satellite, with the “Justify”

33) For the definition of “Justify,” see Appendix 2 “Definitions of Presentational Relations.”

34) J. P. Louw and E. A. Nida, eds., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 779; S. E. Porter, *Idioms of the Greek New Testament*, 207.

35) For the definition of “Motivation,” see Appendix 2 “Definitions of Presentational Relations.”

36) For the definition of “Preparation,” see Appendix 2 “Definitions of Presentational Relations.”

37) S. E. Porter, *Idioms of the Greek New Testament*, 54.

38) For the definition of “Purpose,” see Appendix 3 “Definitions of Subject Matter Relations.”

rhetorical relation between them. The readers' comprehension of Proverbs 8:9-31 increases their readiness to accept wisdom's declaration in Proverbs 8:6b-8.³⁹⁾ Within Proverbs 8:6b-8, Proverbs 8:6b-7 and Proverbs 8:8 both depict the words of wisdom with truth and righteousness but use different expressions. These two sections are linked items as the reexpression of each other and have comparable importance to the purposes of the author. Both Proverbs 8:6b-7 and Proverbs 8:8 are nuclei, the rhetorical relation between which must be defined as "Multinuclear Restatement."⁴⁰⁾

Within Proverbs 8:9-31, wisdom's characteristics in Proverbs 8:9-21a are legitimized by her relationship with YHWH in Proverbs 8:22-31. The readers' comprehension of Proverbs 8:22-31 helps them to accept the author's right to present Proverbs 8:9-21a. Proverbs 8:9-21a as the nucleus and Proverbs 8:22-31 as the satellite have the "Justify" rhetorical relation between them.⁴¹⁾ Within Proverbs 8:9-21a, wisdom delineates her characteristics in six aspects, namely dwelling with counsel and calling upon knowledge and insight in Proverbs 8:9-12, hating distorted ways of evil people in Proverbs 8:13-16, loving those who regard her with affection and seek her in Proverbs 8:17, having wealth, glory, many possessions, and righteousness in Proverbs 8:18-19, walking in ways of righteousness and conducting righteous deeds in Proverbs 8:20-21, and knowing daily events from earliest times in Proverbs 8:21a. These six sections as the linked items are conjoined to form a unit in which each item plays a comparable role. Proverbs 8:9-12, Proverbs 8:13-16, Proverbs 8:17, Proverbs 8:18-19, Proverbs 8:20-21, and Proverbs 8:21a are all nuclei, the rhetorical relation between which can be defined as "Conjunction."⁴²⁾ Within Proverbs 8:18-19, Proverbs 8:18 describes wisdom as having wealth, glory, many possessions, and righteousness, whereas Proverbs 8:19 provides evidence for this description by claiming that products of wisdom are better than gold, silver, or a precious stone. The readers' comprehension of the former increases their belief of the latter. Proverbs 8:18 is the nucleus and Proverbs 8:19 is the satellite, with the "Evidence" rhetorical relation between them.⁴³⁾

39) For the definition of "Justify," see Appendix 2 "Definitions of Presentational Relations."

40) For the definition of "Multinuclear Restatement," see Appendix 4 "Definitions of Multinuclear Relations."

41) For the definition of "Justify," see Appendix 2 "Definitions of Presentational Relations."

42) For the definition of "Conjunction," see Appendix 4 "Definitions of Multinuclear Relations."

Within Proverbs 8:9-12, the persuasion of wisdom to her audience to acquire instruction and knowledge in Proverbs 8:9-11 serves as evidence for her characteristics of dwelling with counsel and calling upon knowledge and insight in Proverbs 8:12. Proverbs 8:12 as the nucleus and Proverbs 8:9-11 as the satellite have the “Evidence” rhetorical relation between them. The readers’ comprehension of Proverbs 8:9-11 enhances their belief of Proverbs 8:12.⁴⁴⁾ Within Proverbs 8:9-11, the fact in Proverbs 8:9 that everything is straight for those who find knowledge is utilized to support wisdom’s persuasion of acquiring instruction and knowledge in Proverbs 8:10-11. The readers’ comprehension of the fact in Proverbs 8:9 increases their desire to perform the action as wisdom persuaded in Proverbs 8:10-11. Proverbs 8:10-11 is the nucleus and Proverbs 8:9 is the satellite, the rhetorical relation between which may be defined as “Motivation.”⁴⁵⁾ Within Proverbs 8:10-11, the legitimacy of wisdom’s persuasion to acquire instruction and knowledge in Proverbs 8:10 is confirmed by the statement in Proverbs 8:11 that wisdom is better than costly stones and all precious stuff. In Proverbs 8:11, the conjunction γὰρ as a marker of cause or reason between events is used for its explanatory sense.⁴⁶⁾ The readers’ comprehension of Proverbs 8:11 helps them to accept the author’s right to present Proverbs 8:10. Proverbs 8:10 is the nucleus and Proverbs 8:11 is the satellite, with the “Justify” rhetorical relation between them.⁴⁷⁾ It is worth mentioning that the verb λάβετε (“to acquire”) in Proverbs 8:10 uses the aorist tense and the imperative mood with no subject expressed, which signals neither specification nor prominence.

Within Proverbs 8:13-16, wisdom acknowledges in Proverbs 8:13 that she hates distorted ways of evil people, with evidence provided in Proverbs 8:14-16 by her counsel, security, insight, and strength. The readers’ comprehension of the latter increases their belief of the former. Proverbs 8:13 is the nucleus and Proverbs 8:14-16 is the satellite, the rhetorical relation between which can be defined as “Evidence.”⁴⁸⁾ Within Proverbs 8:13, Proverbs 8:13a explains that the

43) For the definition of “Evidence,” see Appendix 2 “Definitions of Presentational Relations.”

44) For the definition of “Evidence,” see Appendix 2 “Definitions of Presentational Relations.”

45) For the definition of “Motivation,” see Appendix 2 “Definitions of Presentational Relations.”

46) J. P. Louw and E. A. Nida, eds., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 779; S. E. Porter, *Idioms of the Greek New Testament*, 207.

47) For the definition of “Justify,” see Appendix 2 “Definitions of Presentational Relations.”

48) For the definition of “Evidence,” see Appendix 2 “Definitions of Presentational Relations.”

reason for hating unrighteousness, insolence, pride, and ways of the wicked is the fear of YHWH, while Proverbs 8:13b declares that wisdom hates distorted ways of evil people. The explanation in Proverbs 8:13a helps to interpret the declaration in Proverbs 8:13b since Proverbs 8:13a relates Proverbs 8:13b to a framework of knowledge not involved in Proverbs 8:13b itself. Proverbs 8:13b as the nucleus and Proverbs 8:13a as the satellite have the “Interpretation” rhetorical relation between them.⁴⁹⁾ Within Proverbs 8:14-16, wisdom first announces that she has counsel, security, insight, and strength in Proverbs 8:14, and then legitimizes her announcement by the fact that it is through her that kings reign, the rulers write righteousness, mighty men become mighty, and tyrants control the earth in Proverbs 8:15-16. The readers’ comprehension of Proverbs 8:15-16 increases their readiness to accept the legitimacy of Proverbs 8:14. Proverbs 8:14 is the nucleus and Proverbs 8:15-16 is the satellite, with the “Justify” rhetorical relation between them.⁵⁰⁾ Within Proverbs 8:15-16, wisdom lists two examples to testify her authority, which are through her kings reign and the rulers write righteousness in Proverbs 8:15 and through her mighty men become mighty and tyrants control the earth in Proverbs 8:16. These two sections are linked items comparable to each other. Both Proverbs 8:15 and Proverbs 8:16 are nuclei, the rhetorical relation between which must be defined as “List.”⁵¹⁾

Within Proverbs 8:22-31, wisdom articulates her relationship with YHWH in three aspects, namely having been created by YHWH as the beginning of his ways for his works in Proverbs 8:22-25, having been with YHWH during his creating the world in Proverbs 8:26-30a, and being delighted by YHWH and rejoicing in YHWH’s presence at all times in Proverbs 8:30b-31. These three sections as the linked items are conjoined to form a unit in which each item plays a comparable role. Proverbs 8:22-25, Proverbs 8:26-30a, and Proverbs 8:30b-31 are all nuclei, the rhetorical relation between which should be defined as “Conjunction.”⁵²⁾ Within Proverbs 8:26-30a, Proverbs 8:26 states that YHWH created the world, offering the background information for Proverbs 8:27-30a in which wisdom claims to have been with YHWH during he created the world.

49) For the definition of “Interpretation,” see Appendix 3 “Definitions of Subject Matter Relations.”

50) For the definition of “Justify,” see Appendix 2 “Definitions of Presentational Relations.”

51) For the definition of “List,” see Appendix 4 “Definitions of Multinuclear Relations.”

52) For the definition of “Conjunction,” see Appendix 4 “Definitions of Multinuclear Relations.”

The former increases the readers' ability to comprehend the latter. Proverbs 8:27-30a as the nucleus and Proverbs 8:26 as the satellite have the "Background" rhetorical relation between them.⁵³⁾ Within Proverbs 8:27-30a, wisdom lists various occasions that she was with YHWH during his creation of the world, including preparing the sky and marking off his own throne upon the winds in Proverbs 8:27 and making the clouds above strong, establishing the unfailing springs of the earth under the sky, and making the foundations of the earth strong in Proverbs 8:28-30a. Both Proverbs 8:27 and Proverbs 8:28-30a are nuclei, the rhetorical relation between which may be defined as "List." These two sections are linked items comparable to each other.⁵⁴⁾

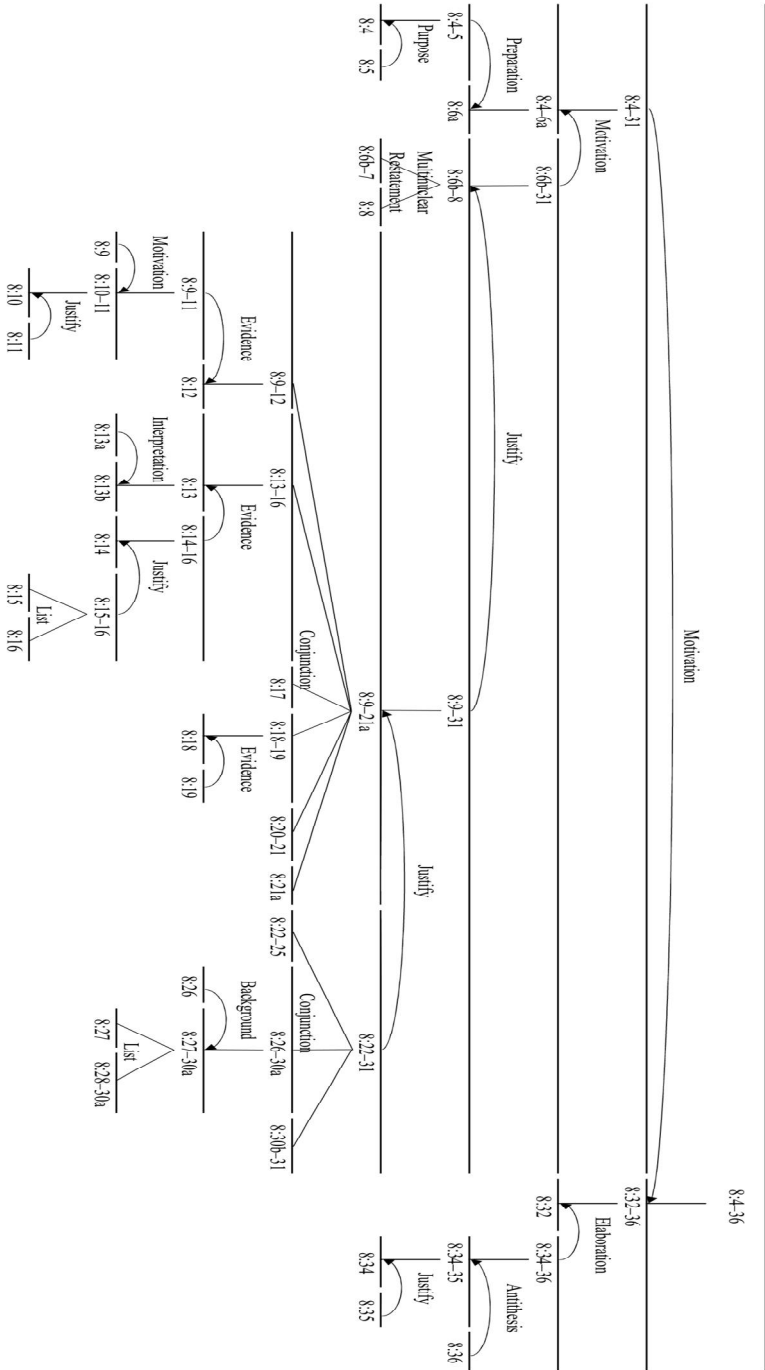
3.4. Rhetorical Structure

According to the rhetorical relations between individual text spans described above, the rhetorical structure of Proverbs 8:4-36 is represented graphically below. For the asymmetrical relation, the nucleus is indicated by a vertical bar above, while the satellite is indicated by an arc pointing to the nucleus. For the symmetrical relation, both nuclei have a straight line above. As the graphical representation of the rhetorical structure demonstrates, Proverbs 8:32 has only vertical bars above with all arcs pointing to it. That is to say, Proverbs 8:32 always acts as the nucleus and is never a part of the satellite. Therefore, Proverbs 8:32 is the essential nucleus of Proverbs 8:4-36.

53) For the definition of "Background," see Appendix 2 "Definitions of Presentational Relations."

54) For the definition of "List," see Appendix 4 "Definitions of Multinuclear Relations."

Figure 1. Rhetorical Structure of Proverbs 8:4-36



3.5. Interpretation

The rhetorical structure of Proverbs 8:4-36 clearly illustrates the way that the author intends to organize and present the text so that the reader is able to properly accept and understand this discourse unit. From this rhetorical-relational analysis, it can be perceived that Proverbs 8:32 is the core verse of Proverbs 8:4-36. The key message that the author aims to convey to the reader is to listen to the wisdom. This message is first expressed in Proverbs 8:6a using the verb *εἰσακούσατέ* (“to listen”) as supporting information, and then highlighted in Proverbs 8:32 using the verb *ἄκουε* (“to listen”) as prominent material. In Proverbs 8:32, wisdom explicitly commands her audience to listen to her, a command to direct the certain action to begin. This command is further elaborated in Proverbs 8:34-36. Wisdom’s command in Proverbs 8:32 reaches the climax of the entire discourse unit, which reflects the author’s point of emphasis. It is based on the process of reasoning in Proverbs 8:4-31 that wisdom gives the command to listen to her in Proverbs 8:32. Proverbs 8:4-31 proclaims that wisdom’s words are with truth and righteousness, the legitimacy of which is justified by her attributes, especially her relationship with YHWH. The proclamation in Proverbs 8:4-31 is to motivate wisdom’s audience to obey her command given in Proverbs 8:32.

It is worth noting that the rhetorical structure of wisdom’s speech in Proverbs 8:4-36 is similar to that of the Shema in Deuteronomy 6:4-9. Deuteronomy 6:4b is the core verse of Deuteronomy 6:4-9. In Deuteronomy 6:4b, the verb *ἄκουε* (“to listen”) uses the present tense and the imperative mood. The subject *Ἰσραήλ* (“Israel”) of the verb *ἄκουε* (“to listen”) is expressed to not only add specification but also signify the prominence. Deuteronomy 6:4b explicitly commands the audience to listen to YHWH, a command to direct the certain action to begin. In Deuteronomy 6:4-9, the key message that the author aims to convey to the reader is to listen to YHWH. This message is highlighted in Deuteronomy 6:4b as prominent material, which reaches the climax of the entire discourse unit and reflects the author’s point of emphasis. Therefore, Deuteronomy 6:4-9 can be counted as an intertext of Proverbs 8:4-36.

4. Conclusion

According to the above rhetorical-relational analysis based on RST, the core verse of Proverbs 8:4-36 in Septuagint is Proverbs 8:32. In conclusion, Proverbs 8:4-36 is an appeal, in which the key message that the author aims to convey to the reader is to listen to the wisdom. Those statements explaining the significance, origin, and authority of wisdom are supporting information used to justify wisdom's appeal of listening to her and to motivate wisdom's audience to obey her command. Moreover, the Shema in Deuteronomy 6:4-9 is closely related to wisdom's speech in Proverbs 8:4-36, and thus Deuteronomy 6:4-9 should be treated as an intertext of Proverbs 8:4-36 for its interpretation.

<Keywords>

Proverbs 8, Wisdom, Septuagint, Systemic Functional Linguistics, Rhetorical Structure Theory.

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<Abstract>

**Listen to the Wisdom of God:
A Rhetorical-Relational Analysis of Proverbs 8:4-36 in the
Septuagint**

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Proverbs 8:4-36, the speech of personified wisdom, is arguably the most discussed text in the book of Proverbs. Biblical scholars generally interpret the Hebrew text of this passage as that Proverbs 8:4-36 is the self-praise of wisdom, which explains the significance, origin, and authority of wisdom. However, this major view may not necessarily stand when the Greek text of Proverbs 8:4-36 in Septuagint is examined. The translation of Proverbs is highly paraphrastic. The Greek text of this passage may express a different focus from the Hebrew text. In addition, the linguistic features of Proverbs 8:4-36, especially its rhetorical structure, that are essential for the appropriate interpretation of this passage have not been fully assessed in the current biblical scholarship. This paper conducts a rhetorical-relational analysis based on Rhetorical Structure Theory (RST) to identify the core section of Proverbs 8:4-36 in Septuagint, namely the most important message conveyed in this passage. This method provides a framework to assess the linguistic features of the biblical text and may offer new insights into the existing research of Proverbs 8:4-36. According to the rhetorical-relational analysis in this paper, I argue that Proverbs 8:4-36 is an appeal, the key message of which is to listen to the wisdom. Those statements explaining the significance, origin, and authority of wisdom are supporting information used to justify the appeal of listening to wisdom.

Appendix 1. Semantic Domains in Proverbs 8:4-36

Semantic Domains	Count
92 Discourse Referentials	86
89 Relations	83
13 Be, Become, Exist, Happen	20
1 Geographical Objects and Features	19
25 Attitudes and Emotions	15
67 Time	11
33 Communication	9
2 Natural Substances	8
88 Moral and Ethical Qualities and Related Behavior	8
15 Linear Movement	7
65 Value	7
30 Think	7
9 People	6
34 Association	6
79 Features of Objects	5
16 Non-Linear Movement	5
58 Nature, Class, Example	5
28 Know	5
8 Body, Body Parts, and Body Products	5
7 Constructions	4
12 Supernatural Beings and Powers	4
37 Control, Rule	4
57 Possess, Transfer, Exchange	4
10 Kinship Terms	3
14 Physical Events and States	3
85 Existence in Space	3
23 Physiological Processes and States	3
83 Spacial Positions	3
69 Affirmation, Negation	3
27 Learn	3
24 Sensory Events and States	3
77 Ready, Prepared	2
76 Power, Force	2
20 Violence, Harm, Destroy, Kill	2
87 Status	2
6 Artifacts	2
26 Psychological Faculties	2
21 Danger, Risk, Safe, Save	2
42 Perform, Do	2
29 Memory and Recall	1
18 Attachment	1

Semantic Domains	Count
74 Able, Capable	1
36 Guide, Discipline, Follow	1
59 Quantity	1
60 Number	1
72 True, False	1
80 Space	1
91 Discourse Markers	1
31 Hold a View, Believe, Trust	1
93 Names of Persons and Places	1
32 Understand	1
53 Religious Activities	1
Grand Total	386

Appendix 2. Definitions of Presentational Relations⁵⁵⁾

Definitions of Presentational Relations			
Relation Name	Constraints on either S or N individually	Constraints on N + S	Intention of W
Antithesis	on N: W has positive regard for N	N and S are in contrast (see the Contrast relation); because of the incompatibility that arises from the contrast, one cannot have positive regard for both of those situations; comprehending S and the incompatibility between the situations increases R's positive regard for N	R's positive regard for N is increased
Background	on N: R won't comprehend N sufficiently before reading text of S	S increases the ability of R to comprehend an element in N	R's ability to comprehend N increases

55) This is an excerpt from the table "Definitions of Presentational Relations." For the definitions of all presentational relations, see M. A. K. Halliday and J. J. Webster, *Text Linguistics*, 209.

Definitions of Presentational Relations			
Relation Name	Constraints on either S or N individually	Constraints on N + S	Intention of W
Evidence	on N: R might not believe N to a degree satisfactory to W	R's comprehending S increases R's belief of N	R's belief of N is increased
	on S: R believes S or will find it credible		
Justify	none	R's comprehending S increases R's readiness to accept W's right to present N	R's readiness to accept W's right to present N is increased
Motivation	on N: N is an action in which R is the actor (including accepting an offer), unrealized with respect to the context of N	Comprehending S increases R's desire to perform action in N	R's desire to perform action in N is increased
Preparation	none	S precedes N in the text; S tends to make R more ready, interested or oriented for reading N	R is more ready, interested or oriented for reading N

Appendix 3. Definitions of Subject Matter Relations⁵⁶⁾

Definitions of Subject Matter Relations			
Relation Name	Constraints on either S or N individually	Constraints on N + S	Intention of W
Elaboration	none	S presents additional detail about the situation or some element of subject matter which is presented in N or inferentially accessible in N in one or more of the ways listed below. In the list, if N presents the first	R recognizes S as providing additional detail for N. R identifies the element of subject matter for which detail

56) This is an excerpt from the table "Definitions of Subject Matter Relations." For the definitions of all subject matter relations, see Ibid., 210-211.

Definitions of Subject Matter Relations			
Relation Name	Constraints on either S or N individually	Constraints on N + S	Intention of W
		member of any pair, then S includes the second: set :: member abstraction :: instance whole :: part process :: step object :: attribute generalization :: specific	is provided.
Interpretation	none	on N + S: S relates N to a framework of ideas not involved in N itself and not concerned with W's positive regard	R recognizes that S relates N to a framework of ideas not involved in the knowledge presented in N itself
Purpose	on N: N is an activity; on S: S is a situation that is unrealized	S is to be realized through the activity in N	R recognizes that the activity in N is initiated in order to realize S

Appendix 4. Definitions of Multinuclear Relations⁵⁷⁾

Definitions of Multinuclear Relations		
Relation Name	Constraints on each pair of N	Intention of W
Conjunction	The items are conjoined to form a unit in which each item plays a comparable role	R recognizes that the linked items are conjoined
List	An item comparable to others linked to it by the List relation	R recognizes the comparability of linked items
Multinuclear Restatement	An item is primarily a reexpression of one linked to it; the items are of comparable importance to the purposes of W	R recognizes the reexpression by the linked items

57) This is an excerpt from the table "Definitions of Multinuclear Relations." For the definitions of all multinuclear relations, see *Ibid.*, 212.