

A DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF HEBREWS 10:19–25

Discourse analysis, or text-linguistics,¹ is an approach to interpreting Scripture that seeks to understand a discourse's use of language and that examines the structure of the entire discourse. This method will be applied to Hebrews 10:19–25 in order to understand its basic meaning and function in the book of Hebrews. However, discourse analysis is not a long-standing,² well defined,³ methodologically established⁴ discipline. Jeffrey Reed, in his article on "Discourse Analysis as a New Testament Hermeneutic," writes that discourse analysis "is not easily defined" and has not had a "lasting, substantive impact on the whole of NT scholarship" (as of 1996).⁵ Therefore, before applying this approach to Heb 10:19–25, (1) discourse analysis will briefly be defined, (2) a description of its basic presuppositions and purposes will be given, and (3) the method of discourse analysis that will be followed in this paper will be articulated.

Discourse Analysis

A Definition

George Guthrie defines linguistics as "the study of human language" and explains that it is "especially concerned with the 'inner workings' of language, or the various aspects of a language which must work together to accomplish an act of

¹Noting the different terms used to refer to this method, Jeffrey Reed suggests, "For the sake of consistency, NT discourse analysts should adopt the term 'discourse analysis' unless they are specifically doing the type of text linguistics found in older works." Jeffrey T. Reed, "Discourse Analysis as New Testament Hermeneutic: A Retrospective and Prospective Appraisal," *JETS* 39/2 (June 1996): 225. "Discourse Analysis" will be the term adopted for this paper.

²Reed and David Black both indicate that discourse analysis began to take shape as a discipline of biblical interpretation in the 1960's. Reed, "Discourse Analysis," 226; and David Alan Black, *Linguistics for Students of New Testament Greek: A Survey of Basic Concepts and Applications* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 170.

³Reed writes, "Discourse analysis is one of the least well-defined areas of linguistics." Reed, "Discourse Analysis," 224.

⁴J. P. Louw describes many different approaches to literature have been called "discourse analysis." J. P. Louw, "Reading a Text as Discourse," In *Linguistics and New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Discourse Analysis*, ed. David Alan Black with Katharine Barnwell and Stephen Levinsohn (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 19.

⁵Reed, "Discourse Analysis," 223. Black also notes, "Discourse Analysis is one of the least understood branches of biblical studies at present" (1995). Black, *Linguistics*, 138.

communication.”⁶ Discourse analysis is linguistic in that it attempts “to analyze a text as an act of coherent communication built on the basis of identifiable principles of communication found in languages throughout the world.”⁷ Reed explains that “discourse analysis,” as it is used by various modern linguists, “refers to the study and interpretation of both the spoken and written communication of humans.”⁸ According to Guthrie, “‘Discourse’ refers to a semantic unit of communication which is more than one sentence in length and forms a unified whole.”⁹

This sequence of definitions helps one understand the unique contribution discourse analysis makes to biblical studies. First, it applies the results of studying the use of language in general to biblical discourse. Second, in interpreting Scripture, discourse analysts argue that the meaning of the discourse is found in paragraphs and larger discourse units instead of only focusing on words, phrases and sentences. Especially for biblical studies, Guthrie provides a useful definition of discourse analysis: “A process of investigation by which one examines the form and function of all the parts and levels of a written discourse, with the aim of better understanding both the parts and the whole of that discourse.”¹⁰

Presuppositions

The presuppositions that discourse analysis is founded upon are more difficult to nail down than its definition. Of the sources consulted, the following principles seemed to be the most common and most important.

The “surface structure,” or the obvious grammatical structure of the discourse, is determined by the “deep structure,” or the meaning the author wants to communicate.¹¹

⁶George H. Guthrie, *The Structure of Hebrews: A Text-Linguistic Analysis* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 35.

⁷Guthrie, *Structure*, 39.

⁸Reed, “Discourse Analysis,” 224.

⁹Guthrie, *Structure*, 46. Black defines “discourse” as “a sequential collection of sentences or utterances that relate in a hierarchy of dominances to form a unity by reason of their interwovenness.” Black, *Linguistics*, 171.

¹⁰George H. Guthrie, “Discourse Analysis,” In *Interpreting the New Testament: Essays on Methods and Issues*, ed. David Alan Black and David S. Dockery (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2001), 255.

¹¹Guthrie explains, “Written text begins with the author’s conception of the theme which he wants to communicate.” Guthrie, *Structure*, 46. Sawyer writes, “The deep structure is what is meant by ‘meaning.’” M. James Sawyer, “An Analysis of the Larger Semantic Units of Galatians,” (Th.M. thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1978: Biblical Studies Press, 1998, <http://www.bible.org/docs/nt/books/gal/sawyer/gal-01.htm>), 1.

The “deep structure” is ordered by features that appear in all language use.¹² The author’s intended meaning influences his choices of language, the “surface structure.” The “surface structure” is made up of “cola” and paragraphs constructed from words, grammar, and style.¹³ Therefore, the main meaning of a discourse is found above sentence level.¹⁴ The discourse is “composed of successively smaller organizational units of language” and “each higher level of textual organization influences all of the lower levels of which it is composed.”¹⁵ The significance level of these units is indicated linguistically by modifying the order, quantity, or type of information.¹⁶ The language code of the surface structure is shared by the author and recipients.¹⁷ Therefore, it is important to understand the social and cultural context of the discourse.¹⁸

The implications of these presuppositions and the hermeneutical concerns they raise will not be dealt with here. This description is only meant to convey the basic principles that discourse analysis is built upon. Such foundational ideas are not even agreed upon by linguists and discourse analysts. Since, as Guthrie points out, “the use of

¹²Robert Bergen writes, “A common set of principles governs the structuring and application of the language code in all languages.” Robert D. Bergen, “Text as a Guide to Authorial Intention: An Introduction to Discourse Criticism,” *JETS* 30/3 (September 1987): 329. Sawyer adds, “Deep structure is not an unattainable, undefined mass of meaning. Rather it can be analyzed and studied in the same manner as can surface structure.” Sawyer, “Galatians,” 1. Reed also explains, “Discourse analysts emphasize the need to interpret natural occurrences of language—language as use.” Reed, “Discourse Analysis,” 234.

¹³Guthrie, *Structure*, 46. Joel Green writes, “A close tie exists between the way a text is structured and the meaning of the text.” Joel B. Green, “Discourse Analysis and NT Interpretation,” In *Hearing the NT: Strategies for Interpretation*, ed. Joel B. Green (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 176.

¹⁴Reed explicates, “The discourse analyst is also guided by the tenet to examine language at a linguistic level larger than the sentence. This is perhaps the most distinguishing, if not best known, feature of the theory.” Reed, “Discourse Analysis,” 231. See also Guthrie, “Discourse Analysis,” 256.

¹⁵Bergen, “Text as a Guide,” 329.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 330–31.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 328.

¹⁸See Green, “Discourse Analysis,” 180–81; Reed writes, “Discourse analysts take seriously the roles of the author, the audience, and the text in communicative events. . . . Discourse should be analyzed for its social functions and thus in its social context.” Reed, “Discourse Analysis,” 229, 233. Black argues, “Discourse analysis is . . . concerned with language as it is used in social contexts, the belief being that language and situation are inseparable.” David Alan Black, ed., *Linguistics and New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Discourse Analysis* (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 12.

text linguistics in biblical studies is in its infancy,”¹⁹ there is not a consensus in theory or in methodology. However, as it develops, its unique contribution and usefulness as an approach to Scripture is becoming evident. James Sawyer explains,

The study of text grammar or discourse has been defended on several empirical and grammatical grounds. It is noted that most utterances are more than one sentence and that discourses have more psychological reality than sentences. It is also contended that sentence grammar leaves much ambiguous material whereas in discourse grammar much of the potential ambiguity is eliminated by reference to the surrounding textual matter. Furthermore, sentence grammar cannot adequately explain the “definitivization of noun phrases, pronominalization, relative clauses verb phrases and tense, sentence adverbials, conjunctions Only a discourse grammar can handle . . . morphological markers at the beginning and end of a text.”²⁰

The main principles that the method of this discourse analysis will be based upon are (1) that the author’s intended meaning is best determined by a study of the entire discourse and the place of each unit in that discourse, (2) that the boundaries of units can be determined by linguistic devices used by the author or linguistic features common to all language, and (3) that each unit is made of “cola” that can be understood through their syntactical and semantic structure. Simply put, “a text-linguist would like to know how the individual parts of a discourse combine to produce the text’s overall meaning.”²¹

Explanation of Method

A common method for discourse analysis is presented by Guthrie and Reed.²² Reed describes the method,

Discourse analysts advocate a bottom-up and top-down interpretation of discourse. The analyst might begin at the bottom with morphology, moving up through words, phrases, clauses, sentences and paragraphs/sections/pericopes (i.e. sequences of sentences and embedded sequences of sentences) until reaching the top—namely, the discourse. From here the direction would be reversed to see how the larger discourse influences paragraph construction and on down.²³

¹⁹Guthrie, *Structure*, 46. Green also notes the “relative youth of discourse analysis in the general world of language analysis.” Green, “Discourse Analysis,” 175.

²⁰Sawyer, “Galatians,” 1.

²¹Black, *Linguistics*, 170.

²²See Guthrie, “Discourse Analysis,” 259–60; and Reed, “Discourse Analysis,” 232.

²³Reed, “Discourse Analysis,” 232.

Although this is the overall movement of the analysis, Guthrie adds that “one must, in essence, move back and forth between the micro- and macrolevels of the discourse.”²⁴ Johannes Louw argues that the periscope is “the largest readily perceptible whole having homogeneity and cohesiveness,” and demonstrates how to execute a “colon” analysis on the unit.²⁵ However, both Louw and Reed warn that, although the paragraph is an appropriate starting place, it is only a means to the end of understanding the entire discourse and that unit in light of the discourse.²⁶ Guthrie agrees, “One need not have time to translate and analyze a whole discourse in order to use aspects of discourse analysis, but a deeper level of understanding will demand that the whole discourse be studied.”²⁷

The present study of Heb 10:19–25 is not a discourse analysis in the strictest sense because this passage is not a complete discourse. It is possible, though, to apply portions of this method to the passage in order to understand the meaning of this unit and its contribution to the meaning of the whole discourse. Using selected parts of the methodologies presented by Guthrie and Sawyer,²⁸ this analysis will: (1) discuss the unit boundaries of Heb 10:10–25, (2) translate and perform basic grammatical analysis on the text, (3) analyze its syntactical and semantic structure (sometimes referred to as colon analysis), and (4) observe the function and meaning of this unit within the whole discourse of Hebrews.

Unit Boundaries

The first step for this analysis will be to determine the boundaries of the unit under investigation. Since identifying the boundaries of a unit according to the use of language is best done in the original language, Guthrie suggests that the first step in discourse analysis would be to translate and note the basic grammar of the entire discourse.²⁹ For this limited treatment of Heb 10:19–25, the unit boundaries will first be determined, and then a translation and grammatical analysis will follow.

Sawyer recommends that one attempting to divide a discourse into sections should consider the paragraph divisions in Greek texts, English versions, and commentaries.³⁰ In the sources consulted for this paper, every version, commentary, and article distinguished Heb 10:19–25 as a paragraph unit. The *New American Standard*:

²⁴Guthrie, “Discourse Analysis,” 260.

²⁵Johannes P. Louw, “Discourse Analysis and the Greek New Testament,” *Technical Papers for the Bible Translator* 24/1 (January 1973): 103.

²⁶See Louw, “Discourse Analysis,” 103; and Reed, “Discourse Analysis,” 232.

²⁷Guthrie, “Discourse Analysis,” 261.

²⁸See Guthrie, “Discourse Analysis,” 260; and Sawyer, “Galatians,” 38–39.

²⁹See Guthrie, “Discourse Analysis,” 260–61.

³⁰See Sawyer, “Galatians,” 38.

1995 Update and New King James Version both arrange 10:19–25 as a paragraph and unit with a title. *The Greek New Testament*³¹ and the *New International Version* make 10:9–25 a paragraph within the titled unit 10:19–39, while the *Novum Testamentum Graece*³² separates it as a paragraph and does not use titles. The commentaries and articles considered were by Guthrie, James Moffatt, Craig Koester, Marcus Dods, David deSilva, F. F. Bruce, Harold Attridge, Steve Stanley, B. F. Westcott, and William Lane.³³

Although there is no disagreement concerning the boundaries of this paragraph, it will still be helpful to note the linguistic devices that indicate its limitations. Guthrie describes two ways that one can identify unit boundaries in a discourse: “tracking cohesion shifts” and “identification of inclusions.”³⁴ “Cohesion” is “a semantic property of a text which gives the text unity”³⁵ and a shift in several of the elements that provide cohesion reveal unit boundaries.³⁶ One may discover cohesion shifts in a discourse by observing changes in genre, topic, connection (the “semantic interdependence between two cola), subject, actor, the tense, person, and number of verbs, pronominal references, lexical cohesion, and temporal and spatial indicators.³⁷

A cohesion shift between Heb 10:18 and 10:19 is apparent due to a shift in topic and genre. Heb 10:1–18 discusses “The Finality of Christ’s Sacrifice,” while 10:19 introduces a new exhortation “to take action on the basis of Christ’s superior

³¹Barbara Aland, Kurt Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, and Carlo M. Martini, eds., *The Greek New Testament*, 4th rev. ed. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1998), 761–62.

³²Barbara Aland, Kurt Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carlo M. Martini, and Bruce M. Metzger, eds. *Novum Testamentum Graece* 27th rev. ed. (Stuttgart : Deutsche Bibelstiftung, 1993).

³³ See Guthrie, *Structure*, 144; James Moffatt, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1957), 141; Craig C. Koester, *Hebrews: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 442; Marcus Dods, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, The Expositor's Greek Testament, vol. 4 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 345. David A. deSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle “to the Hebrews”* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 335; F. F. Bruce, “The Structure and Argument of Hebrews,” *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 28:1 (Fall 1985): 10; Harold Attridge, *To the Hebrews*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989), 283; Steve Stanley, “The Structure of Hebrews from Three Perspectives,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 45:2 (1994): 270; Brooke Foss Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: The Greek Text with Notes and Essays* (New York: Macmillan, 1892), 317; and William Lane, *Hebrews 9–13*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas, TX: Word, 1991), 279–81. All of the commentators treated 10:19–25 as a separate unit, while Lane treated it as a paragraph of the unit 10:19–33.

³⁴Guthrie, *Structure*, 49–55.

³⁵Ibid., 49.

³⁶Ibid., 54.

³⁷Ibid., 50–53.

priesthood.”³⁸ The verbs also change to the present subjunctive first person plural and the subject changes to the first person plural pronoun indicated by the verb. Finally the “actor” cohesion field is dominated by what Guthrie identifies as the “Christian Community,” which extends to 10:39.³⁹ The combined affect of these shifts indicates a “high level” shift at 10:18 and 10:19.

The break between 10:25 and 10:26 is not as marked because, as will be demonstrated below, 10:19–25 is the introductory unit of the final section of the book. However, a median level shift is apparent due to the introductory transition γὰρ in v. 26, the introduction of a new topic, “sin,” the discontinuation of the hortatory imperative and the initiation of a new, extended argument.

Translation and Parsing

Table 1. Translation and Parsing of Heb 10:19–25

¹⁹ ἘΧΟΝΤΕΣ οὖν, ἀδελφοί, παρρησίαν εἰς τὴν εἴσοδον τῶν ἁγίων ἐν τῷ αἵματι
[pres.act.part.mas.pl.nom. ἔχω]

Therefore, brothers, having confidence in the entrance of the holy place by the blood of

Ἰησοῦ, ²⁰ ἣν ἐνεκαίμισεν ἡμῖν ὁδὸν πρόσφατον καὶ ζῶσαν διὰ τοῦ
[aor.act.ind.3rd sing. ἐγκαινίζω]

Jesus, which he newly established for us, a new and living way, through the

καταπετάσματος, τοῦτ' ἔστιν τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ, ²¹ καὶ ἱερέα μέγαν ἐπὶ τὸν οἶκον
veil, that is, *by* is his flesh, and *having* a great priest over the house

τοῦ θεοῦ, ²² προσερχώμεθα μετὰ ἀληθινῆς καρδίας ἐν πληροφορίᾳ πίστεως
[pres.mid.sub.1st.pl. προσέρχομαι]

of God, let us approach with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith,

ῥεραντισμένοι τὰς καρδίας ἀπὸ συνειδήσεως πονηρᾶς καὶ λελουσμένοι τὸ σῶμα
[per.pas.part.mas.pl.nom. ῥαντίζω] [per.pas.part.mas.pl.nom. λούω]
having *our* hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and *our* bodies washed

ὑδατι καθαρῷ.²³ κατέχωμεν τὴν ὁμολογίαν τῆς ἐλπίδος ἀκλινηί,
[pres.act.sub.1st.pl. κατέχω]

³⁸Guthrie, *Structure*, 71.

³⁹Ibid., 71–72.

with pure water; Let us hold firmly the confession of *our* hope without wavering,

πιστὸς γὰρ ὁ ἐπαγγειλάμενος, ²⁴ καὶ κατανοῶμεν ἀλλήλους εἰς
 [aor.mid.part.mas.sing.nom. ἐπαγγέλλομαι] [pres.act.sub.1st.pl. κατανοέω]
 for he who promised is faithful, and let us consider how to

παροξυσμὸν ἀγάπης καὶ καλῶν ἔργων, ²⁵ μὴ ἐγκαταλείποντες τὴν ἐπισυναγωγὴν
 [pres.act.part.mas.pl.nom. ἐγκαταλείπω]
 stimulate one another toward love and good works, not forsaking the gathering of

ἐαυτῶν, καθὼς ἔθος τισίν, ἀλλὰ παρακαλοῦντες, καὶ τοσοῦτω
 [pres.act.part.mas.pl.nom. παρακαλέω]
 ourselves together, as *is* the habit of some, but encouraging *one another*, and all the

μᾶλλον ὅσῳ βλέπετε ἐγγίζουσιν τὴν ἡμέραν.

more since you see the day drawing near.

Other issues that are often considered under the title “grammar” will be addressed in the next section on the text’s syntactical and semantic structure.

Syntactical and Semantic Structure

Studying the syntactical and semantic structure of a text is sometimes called “colon analysis.” Guthrie writes, “To understand the author’s development of his theme, one must first examine each colon on the lexical, syntactic, and rhetorical levels.”⁴⁰ Black defines a colon as

a unit of grammatical structure with clearly marked external dependencies. It always has either overtly or covertly a central matrix consisting of a nominal element (subject) and a verbal element (predicate), each having the possibility of extended features.⁴¹

⁴⁰Guthrie, *Structure*, 46–47. Sometimes the term “rhetorical” refers to the semantic functions of phrases. Normally it refers to the linguistic devices used for impact and emphasis in the discourse. Due to the limitations of this paper, this colon analysis will focus on the semantic functions of the cola and will not explore other rhetorical devices used.

⁴¹David Alan Black, “A Note on the Structure of Hebrews 12:1–2,” *Biblica* 68 (1987): 176.

The colon structure of a text is its syntactic structure.⁴² Paragraphs consist of sentences, which consist of cola. The study of the cola is ultimately to understand the paragraphs, which is what carries the author's meaning as they form the discourse.⁴³

There are many approaches to studying the syntactic structure of a text.⁴⁴ Most methods use some type of diagram to depict the syntactical relationships of the words and phrases. Some diagrams place one colon or phrase on a line in the order in which it appears in the text and indicate subordinate phrases by place them under (or pointing arrows from) the phrases they modify. Some of these diagrams also indicate the semantic function of each phrase. Other diagrams create a tree chart that reveals the semantic function of each word and phrase.

Guthrie's method, which is described in *Biblical Greek Exegesis*,⁴⁵ constructs a diagram of the syntactical relationships (which he calls a "grammatical diagram") that can also include the semantic functions of each phrase (a "semantic diagram"). Due to the clarity and effectiveness of his approach, it will be adopted in this paper for the analysis of Heb 10:19–25. First a syntactical and semantic diagram will be presented, and then the relationships between the cola will be discussed.

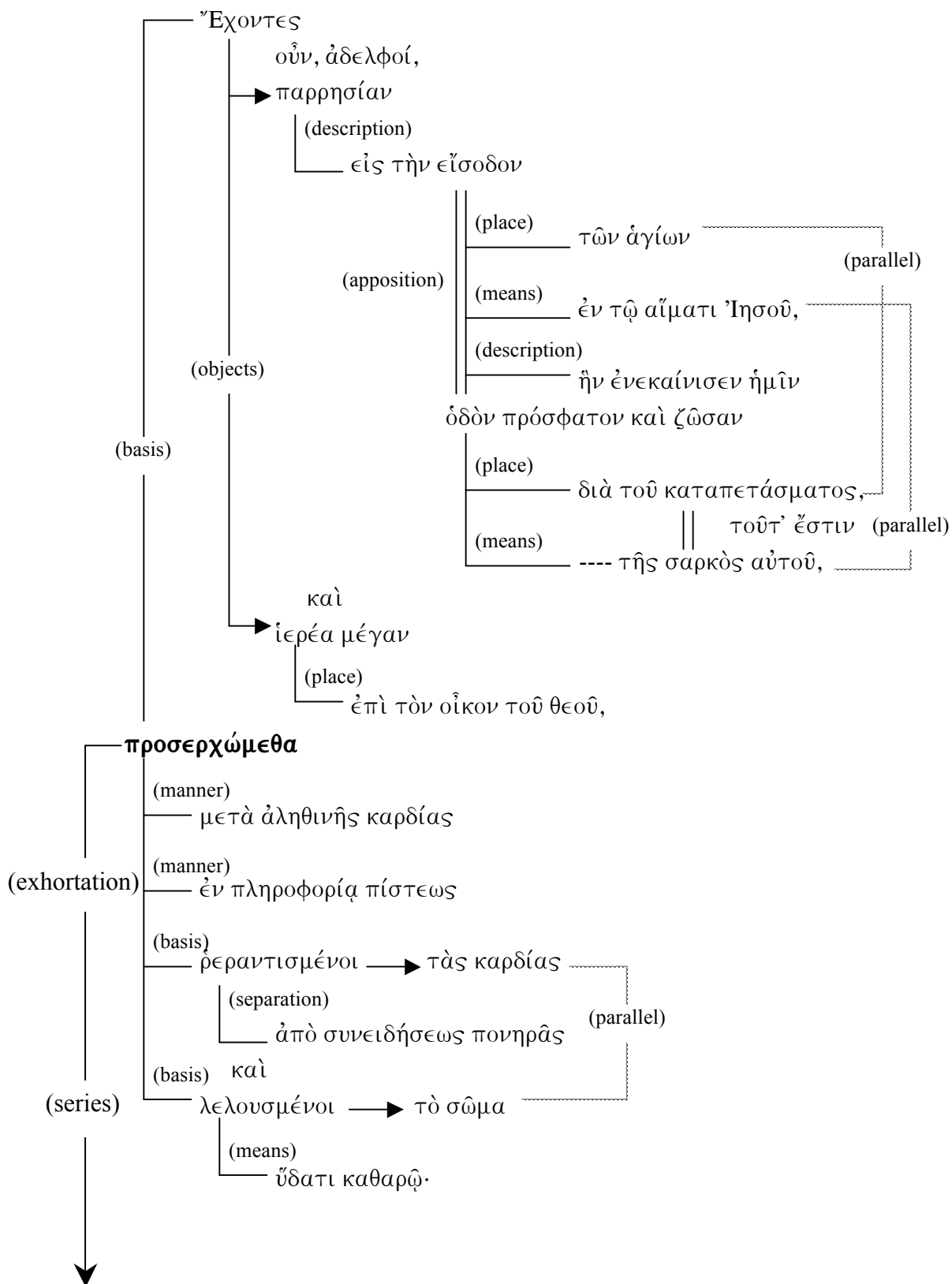
⁴²See Black, "Hebrews 1:1–4," 177.

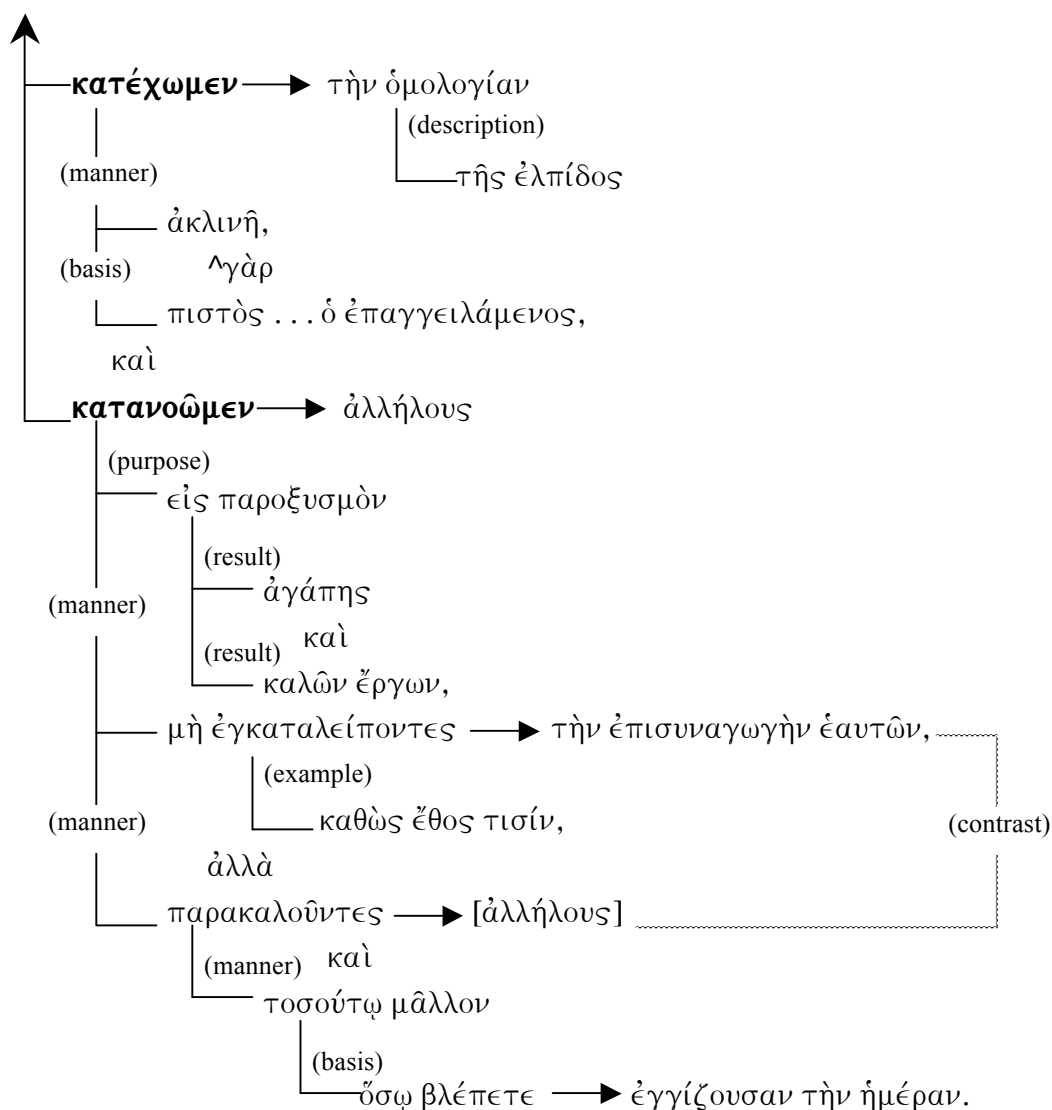
⁴³See Guthrie, *Structure*, 46–47.

⁴⁴A few examples directly linked to the field of linguistics and discourse analysis include J. P. Louw, who demonstrates his method in "Discourse Analysis and the Greek New Testament" and "Reading Text as Discourse" and describes his method in *Semantics of New Testament Greek* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982); Peter Cotterell and Max Turner, *Linguistics and Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1989), 188–226; and Guthrie and J. Scott Duvall, *Biblical Greek Exegesis: A Graded Approach to Learning Intermediate and Advanced Greek* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 27–53.

⁴⁵Guthrie, *Biblical Greek Exegesis*, 27–53.

Table 2. A Diagram of the Syntactical and Semantic Structure of Heb 10:19–25





There are three main cola (a subject and verb) in this unit: “let us approach” (προσερχώμεθα), “let us hold firmly” (κατέχωμεν), and “let us consider” (κατανοῶμεν). These three are parallel in that they are all present active (or middle deponent) subjunctive, first person plural. Semantically they are a series of exhortations. Including their objects, the three main ideas of this unit are “let us approach [the holy place],” “let us hold firmly the confession,” and “let us consider how to stimulate one another.” This unit may be further divided in two since the first exhortation is much more fully developed than the last two and the last two are connected by καὶ. The first part deals with “the heavenly sanctuary” (vv. 19–22) and the last with its counterpart, “the earthly community” (vv. 23–25).⁴⁶

⁴⁶Koester, *Hebrews*, 447.

“Let us approach” is modified by one participle, “having,” which has two direct objects connected by καὶ. They have (1) “confidence in the entrance of the holy place” and (2) “a great priest.” Having these is the basis or grounds for the exhortation “let us approach.” “The entrance” (τὴν εἴσοδον) has three modifiers: “the holy place,” indicating the place of entrance, “by the blood of Jesus,” expressing the means of entrance, and “which he newly established for us,” giving further description of the entrance.

Most translations and many commentators suggest that the relative clause “which he newly established for us” modifies the next phrase “a new and living way” (ὁδὸν πρόσφατον καὶ ζῶσαν). However, in its more natural reading, it modifies “the entrance.”⁴⁷ In addition, if “a new and living way” is interpreted as appositional to “the entrance,” then either could be modified by the relative clause without much change in meaning. Although some take “way” to be subordinate to “entrance” as a means,⁴⁸ taking them as parallel nouns is possible and does not require one to supply a preposition.⁴⁹

“A new and living way” is modified by “through the veil” (διὰ τοῦ καταπετάσματος) as the indicator of place, and “by his flesh” (τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ) as an expression of means. This construction takes “that is” (τοῦτ’ ἔστιν) as the modifier of “the veil” instead of “way.”⁵⁰ Therefore “his flesh” is appositional to “the veil” and can modify “way” with an elliptical use of διὰ — “by his flesh.” Some scholars take “his flesh” as a descriptive genitive modifying “way.”⁵¹ Westcott argues that the Greek permits such a reading and he appears to have problems with taking Christ’s flesh as equivalent to the curtain, which is a barrier to the holy place.⁵² Lane maintains that “that is, his flesh” modifies the entire preceding sentence. He writes that taking it as an apposition to “the veil” “obscures the argument of the passage and fails to take account of the obvious parallel provided in 6:19–20.”

However, Bruce points out that the more natural sequence is that “that is” modifies “the veil” and that there is no interpretive reason “his flesh” could not be

⁴⁷See Westcott, *Hebrews*, 319; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 285; and Lane, *Hebrews*, 275.

⁴⁸See Dods, *Hebrews*, 345–46; Desilva, *Perseverance*, 335; Moffatt, *Hebrews*, 142; and Bruce, *Hebrews*, 245.

⁴⁹Koester and Westcott take “a new and living way” as appositional to “the entrance.” See Koester, *Hebrews*, 442; and Westcott, *Hebrews*, 319.

⁵⁰See Dods, *Hebrews*, 346; Moffatt, *Hebrews*, 143; Calvin, *Commentary on Hebrews*, The Theological Journal Library 2.0 (Garland, TX: Galaxie Software); Chrysostom, *Epistle to the Hebrews*, The Theological Journal Library 2.0 (Garland, TX: Galaxie Software).

⁵¹See deSilva, *Perseverance*, 335; Lane, *Hebrews*, 275; and Westcott, *Hebrews*, 320.

⁵²See Westcott, *Hebrews*, 320.

characterized as “the veil.”⁵³ Koester calls attention to the parallel genitive cases of “the veil” and “his flesh” and similar use of apposition in Heb 2:14; 7:5; 9:11:13:15.⁵⁴ Attridge writes concerning the use of “that is” in Hebrews: “Even though the explication need not immediately follow the word explained, the explication always stands in apposition with the word and is in the same case.”⁵⁵ In the end, it seems that “his flesh” is best taken in apposition to “the veil.” This view fits nicely into the parallel that appears in vv. 19–20:

Table 3. A Parallel in Heb 10:19–20

A εἰς τὴν εἴσοδον in the entrance	A’ ἣν ἐνεκαίνισεν ἡμῖν ὁδὸν a new and living way
B τῶν ἁγίων of the holy place	B’ διὰ τοῦ καταπετάσματος through the veil
C ἐν τῷ αἵματι Ἰησοῦ by the blood of Jesus	C’ τοῦτ’ ἔστιν τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ that <i>by</i> is his flesh

This parallel becomes even more apparent in the semantic portion of the diagram (table 2) since A and A’ are in apposition, B and B’ both indicate place, and C and C’ both indicate means.

The second object of “having” is “a great priest” (ἱερέα μέγαν), which is modified by “over the house of God” (ἐπὶ τὸν οἶκον τοῦ θεοῦ), indicating the place or position of the “great priest.” “Let us approach” is then modified by four other subordinate phrases. The first two are “with a sincere heart” (μετὰ ἀληθινῆς καρδίας) and “in full assurance of faith” (ἐν πληροφορίᾳ πίστεως), which both indicate the manner in which one is to approach. The third phrase is “having *our* hearts sprinkled” (ῥεραντισμένοι τὰς καρδίας), which is modified by “from an evil conscience” (ἀπὸ συνειδήσεως πονηρᾶς), expressing separation. The fourth is “having *our* bodies washed” (λελουσμένοι τὸ σῶμα), which is modified by “with pure water” (ὔδατι καθαρῷ), conveying the means by which the body is washed. These last two phrases are parallel as perfect passive participles and are connected by καὶ.

The second main exhortation, “let us hold firmly” (κατέχωμεν), has “the confession” (τὴν ὁμολογίαν) as its direct object and “of *our* hope” (τῆς ἐλπίδος) as a further description of “the confession.” “Let us hold firmly” is then adverbially modified

⁵³See Bruce, *Hebrews*, 247.

⁵⁴See Koester, *Hebrews*, 443.

⁵⁵Attridge, *Hebrews*, 286.

by “without wavering” (ἀκλινη) as the manner in which one is to hold firmly, and “for he who promised is faithful” (πιστὸς γὰρ ὁ ἐπαγγειλάμενος) as the basis.

“Let us consider” (κατανοῶμεν), the final main exhortation, has as its direct object “one another” (ἀλλήλους) and is modified three times. The purpose of “let us consider one another” is “to stimulate” (παροξυσμὸν) one another with the result of “love and good works” (ἀγάπης καὶ καλῶν ἔργων). The next two phrases contrast one another and describe the manner in which the audience might consider one another to stimulate love and good works. First, they can consider one another by “not forsaking the gathering of ourselves together” (μὴ ἐγκαταλείποντες τὴν ἐπισυναγωγὴν ἑαυτῶν). The author then points to a bad example: “as *is* the habit of some” (καθὼς ἔθος τισίν). Second, they can consider one another by “encouraging *one another*” (παρακαλοῦντες). They are to encourage one another “all the more since you see the day drawing near” (τοσοῦτω μᾶλλον ὅσῳ βλέπετε ἐγγίζουσιν τὴν ἡμέραν).

In view of these syntactical and semantic relationships, the basic meaning of the cola may be expressed as such:

Table 4. Basic Meaning of the Cola in Heb 10:10–25

Let us approach the holy place since we have confidence in the entrance thereof.
 We have an entrance by the blood of Jesus.
 Our entrance is newly established by Jesus.
 Our entrance is a new and living way.
 Let us approach the holy place since we have a great priest over the house of God.
 Let us approach the holy place in this manner:
 with a pure heart
 in full assurance of faith.
 Let us approach the holy place because
 our hearts have been sprinkled from an evil conscience
 our bodies have been washed with pure water.

Let us hold fast to our confession of hope without wavering.
 Let us hold fast to our confession because he who promised is faithful.

Let us consider one another for stimulation of love and good works.
 Let us consider one another by
 gathering together (although some do not).
 encouraging one another (more as the day approaches).

In attempting to identify an overall theme for Heb 10:19–25, one finds that these three exhortations are somewhat loosely connected theologically. It appears that their connection is not in their content, but in the basis for the action. Verses 19–21 are grammatically connected to the first exhortation only. However, it may also function as the basis for all three exhortations. Bruce captures the flow of argument well: “In view of all that has been accomplished for us in Christ, he says, let us confidently approach God

in worship, let us maintain our Christian confession and hope, let us help one another by meeting together regularly for mutual encouragement.”⁵⁶ It is also interesting to note that “the three exhortations . . . highlight the three cardinal virtues of faith (vs 22), hope (vs 23), and love (vs 24).”⁵⁷

Function and Meaning of Unit within Discourse

The final step is to analyze the function and meaning of Heb 10:19–25 within the whole discourse of Hebrews. To achieve this goal, it is necessary to understand how Heb 10:19–25 relates to the other units and sections of the discourse. Guthrie explains, “To understand the semantic program of a main discourse, therefore, one must analyze the relationships between its constituent paragraphs.”⁵⁸ Several writers place 10:19–25 within a larger section of 10:19–29, 19–31 or 19–39.⁵⁹ Heb 10:19–39 is probably a more likely unit due the lexical cohesion created by references to the Christian community. Many commentators see 10:19–25 as a transition unit, either at the end of a larger expositional section,⁶⁰ the beginning of an application section in the last portion of the book (10:19–12:29),⁶¹ or both.⁶² As an overlapping transitional unit, 10:19–25 marks a major turning point in the book by summarizing the previous arguments and setting out points that will be expanded in the remaining discourse.⁶³

The fullest treatment of the structure of Hebrews from a linguistic approach is probably Guthrie’s *The Structure of Hebrews: A Text-Linguistic Analysis*. In it he notes several ways that Heb 10:19–25 fits into the overall discourse. He observes the switching back and forth of the genre between units throughout the discourse. A major contribution of his work is the identification of “hook words” that are used by the author “to link units of the same genre separated by intervening units of a different genre.”⁶⁴ This “suggests

⁵⁶Bruce, *Hebrews*, 244.

⁵⁷Attridge, *Hebrews*, 283.

⁵⁸Guthrie, *Structure*, 48.

⁵⁹See Lane, *Hebrews*, 279; Moffatt, *Hebrews*, 141; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 283; Stanley, “Structure,” 270; and Albert Vanhoye, *Structured Translation of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, Tran. J. Swetnam (Rome: Pontificio Biblicol 1st, 1964).

⁶⁰Heb 10:19–39 is the end of the “great central division of the sermon (5:11–10:39).” Lane, *Hebrews*, 279; See also Stanley, “Structure,” 270; Vanhoye, *Structured*; and Koester, *Hebrews*, 85.

⁶¹See Moffatt, *Hebrews*, 141; Dods, *Hebrews*, 345; Westcott, *Hebrews*, 1; and Bruce, “Structure,” 10.

⁶²See Attridge, *Hebrews*, 283; and Guthrie, *Structure*, 144; and Lane, *Hebrews*, 280.

⁶³See Lane, *Hebrews*, 280; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 283; and Bruce, *Hebrews*, 244.

⁶⁴Guthrie, *Structure*, 115.

conclusion of the preceding expositional section and a fitting introduction to the hortatory section found in rest of the book.⁷² In evaluating the connection of the hortatory units throughout the book, Guthrie identifies an extended chiasmic structure.⁷³ In the chiasm 10:19–25 parallels 4:14–16 as “Hold Fast and Draw Near.” These are two units removed from the center of the chiasm, which is the warning of 6:4–8.

Guthrie states that the lexical cohesion of the entire book depends on the term “God,” references to God, references to Jesus and the word of God, “sin,” and references to the community.⁷⁴ Heb 10:19–25 contains references to God (“the holy place” and the elliptical “let us approach [God or the holy place]”), many references to Jesus, and many references to the community. This high level of lexical cohesion with the whole discourse reaffirms the important role Heb 10:19–25 in the overall discourse as it concludes the largest expositional section and introduces the largest hortatory section. It clearly makes significant contributions to the purpose of Hebrews, which, as Guthrie identifies, “is to exhort the hearers to endure in their pursuit of the promised reward, in obedience to the word of God, and especially on the basis of their new covenant relationship with the Son”⁷⁵

Conclusion

Discourse analysis is an approach to interpreting Scripture that seeks to understand a discourse’s use of language and that examines the structure of the entire discourse. Although it is fairly new to biblical studies and is still taking shape as a discipline, it is a useful tool for interpreting Scripture. The basic principles that provide the foundation for this analysis are (1) that the author’s intended meaning is best determined by a study of the entire discourse and the place of each unit in that discourse, (2) that the boundaries of the units can be determined by the use of language, and (3) that each unit is made of “cola” that can be understood through their syntactical and semantic structure.

This paper sought to apply features of discourse analysis to Heb 10:19–25. The boundaries of this paragraph unit have been established by observing the cohesion shifts at vv. 18 and 19 and vv. 25 and 26. The use of syntactical and semantic diagramming, followed by a discussion of how the cola relate, proved to be extremely helpful in understanding the message and theme of the passage. Heb 10:19–25 encourages its readers to approach God in sincere worship, hold firmly to their confession, and to encourage one another in love and good works. All of these actions are to be taken because of all that has been accomplished for us in Christ.

As an overlapping transitional unit, 10:19–25 marks a major turning point in the book by summarizing the previous arguments and setting out points that are expanded in

⁷²See Guthrie, *Structure*, 103, 144.

⁷³Ibid., 136.

⁷⁴Ibid., 94.

⁷⁵Guthrie, *Structure*, 143.

the remaining discourse. It functions as a transition partly because it forms the end of an inclusion that marks the largest section of expository discourse in the book. Its parallel to 4:14–16 is the most prominent use of parallelism and inclusion in the book. Due to its high level of lexical cohesion with the whole discourse, and its crucial function in the overall structure, Heb 10:19–25 plays a significant role in communicating the message of the book of Hebrews.

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