

TRUE LOVE
PREACHING THROUGH THE BIBLE: SONG OF SOLOMON
Song 8:6-7

I. INTRODUCTION

A. TITLE

1. HEBREW

- *Shir Hashirim* = The Song of Songs
- Phrase opens the book—**1:1**
- Meaning—**the best song**—of all those Solomon ever wrote
- Solomon wrote 1005 songs—**I Kgs 4:32-33**

2. SEPTUAGINT

- *Ασμα Ασμάτων* = Song of Songs

3. LATIN

- *Canticum Canticorum* = Song of Songs
- English transliteration = Canticle of Canticles

4. ENGLISH

- *Song of Solomon*—because Solomon is identified as the author—**1:1**

B. TYPE OF LITERATURE

1. PLACE IN HEBREW CANON

- a. One of eleven books in the ‘Writings’—*Ketuvim*
- b. **Fourth** in *Ketuvim* order

- Psalms
- Proverbs
- Job
- **Song of Solomon**
- Ruth
- Lamentations
- Ecclesiastes
- Esther
- Daniel
- Ezra
- Chronicles

2. GENRE

- One of **five poetic** books—Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon

3. STYLE

- a. A poetic love song—with dialogue between bridegroom and bride
- b. A one-act drama with three main speakers
 - The **bridegroom**—Solomon the king
 - The **bride**—the Shulamite vine-dresser
 - The **chorus**—daughters of Jerusalem
- c. Two possible levels
 1. Historical—account of Solomon’s romance with a [poor?] Shulamite woman
 2. Allegorical—portrayal of God’s love for His people—Israel—[later the church]

C. PURPOSES

1. HISTORICAL

- a. Poetic account of Solomon’s love and marriage to a Shulamite woman
- b. Gives correct perspective about love, sex and beauty—within its proper context—marriage

2. ALLEGORICAL

- a. Depicts God’s love for His bride—Israel
- b. Later applied by Christians—to show Christ’s love for the church
- c. But the symbolism is not as directly linked as in other OT allegories about marriage
 - See [Ezekiel 16](#) and [23](#); and [Hosea 1-3](#)

D. AUTHOR

1. SOME SCHOLARS REJECT SOLOMON AS AUTHOR

- They say it is a later collection of songs *about* Solomon

2. INTERNAL EVIDENCE—KING SOLOMON WAS AUTHOR

- a. Attributed in **1:1**—*The Song of Songs, which is Solomon’s*
- b. Solomon is mentioned 7 times
 - **1:1, 5**
 - **3:7, 9, 11**
 - **8:11-12**
- c. Solomon is *identified* as the bridegroom—**3:11**
- d. The king’s court was luxurious like Solomon’s—**3:6-11**
- e. The king had a large harem—60 queens and 80 concubines—**6:8**

- So—this was fairly **early** in Solomon’s reign
 - Solomon eventually had 700 queens and 300 concubines—I Kgs 11:3
- f. Solomon had great knowledge of plant/animal world—I Kgs 4:32-33
- This book mentions 21 plant species and 15 animal species
- g. Geographical reference *might* suggest Israel was still a united kingdom
- Tirzah (6:4) was the northern capital during Solomon’s reign
 - Samaria became the capital of Israel (Northern Kingdom)
 - But Tirzah was the capital during the *early* history of the Northern Kingdom

E. DATE OF COMPOSITION AND EDITING

1. EARLY IN SOLOMON’S REIGN—SOON AFTER ACCESSION (970 BC)
2. BEFORE HIS LATER YEARS—OF GROSS IMMORALITY AND IDOLATRY

F. SETTING

1. SOLOMON’S COURT—JERUSALEM
2. THE BRIDE’S HOME COUNTRY
 - a. She was a Shulamite—6:13
 - b. Term probably derived from Shunem
 - Town southwest of the Sea of Galilee
 - In the territory of the tribe of Issachar
3. FIFTEEN OTHER LOCATIONS MENTIONED—FROM LEBANON TO EGYPT

G. CANONICITY

1. REASONS FOR EARLY RESISTANCE CANONICITY
 - a. No mention of God
 - Though NASB translates ‘mighty flame’ as ‘very flame of the Lord’—8:6
 - b. Explicitly sexual nature of content
2. REASONS FOR FINAL ACCEPTANCE CANONICITY
 - It is an allegory—describing God’s love for His people
 - It is a practical work of wisdom—describing healthy views about love, sex, marriage

H. BIBLICAL CONTEXT

NOT QUOTED ELSEWHERE IN SCRIPTURE

I. STRUCTURE

1:1-3:5 COURTSHIP—FALLING IN LOVE

3:6-5:1 WEDDING AND CONSUMMATION

5:2-7:9 ANXIETY AND MUTUAL ADMIRATION IN MARRIAGE

7:10-8:14 GROWING IN LOVE

II. BIBLICAL TEXT—Song 8:6-7

[KJV] **6** *Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame. 7 Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned.*

[NIV] **6** *Place me like a seal over your heart, like a seal on your arm; for love is as strong as death, its jealousy unyielding as the grave. It burns like blazing fire, like a mighty flame. 7 Many waters cannot quench love; rivers cannot sweep it away. If one were to give all the wealth of one's house for love, it would be utterly scorned.*

[NASB] **6** *Put me like a seal over your heart, like a seal on your arm. For love is as strong as death, jealousy is as severe as Sheol; its flashes are flashes of fire, the very flame of the Lord. 7 "Many waters cannot quench love, nor will rivers overflow it; if a man were to give all the riches of his house for love, it would be utterly despised."*

III. EXPOSITION

A. SPEAKER AND SUBJECT

1. SCHOLARS DEBATE ABOUT WHO IS SPEAKING

- But grammatical structure suggests it is Solomon's bride—the Shulamite vinedresser

2. SUBJECT

- True love—confessing to Solomon the depth of her love for him
- And urging Solomon to reciprocate in like manner

6a *Put me like a seal over your heart, like a seal on your arm.*

1. SEAL = signet ring—*chotham*—from root 'to impress'

- An engraved stone or metal seal—used to mark possession/ownership

- D
- Having this seal was tantamount to having free access to all one's possessions

2. CUSTOM

- a. Wearing signet rings or cylinder seals on cords around the neck
- b. Sometimes bound on the arm or right hand
- c. In order to guard the seal closely—and prevent others from misusing it
- d. To possess this seal—is to represent its owner in all dealings

▪ **Example—Tamar asked for Judah's seal—Gen 38:18**

3. IMPLICATIONS

- a. Seal—represents two things
 1. Permission to be possessed by the loved one
 2. Desire for love to be 'sealed'—abiding union of permanent love
- b. She wants to imprint her claim on her lover—openly—deeply—permanently

4. MODERN EQUIVALENTS—SEALING ONE'S LOVE

- a. Physical objects—lavalier—pin—engagement ring—wedding band

The wedding ring is a symbol of marriage in at least two ways: the purity of gold symbolizes the purity of your love for each other, and the unending circle symbolizes the unending vows which you are taking, which may be broken honorably in the sight of God only by death. As a token of your vows, you will give and receive the rings.

- b. Verbal seal = vow

I take thee _____ to my wedded Wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death us do part, according to God's holy ordinance; and thereto I plight thee my troth.

5. ANOTHER TRANSLATION

6a *Put me like a seal over your heart, like a seal on your arm.*

Write my name on your hear; hold no one in your arms but me

6b *For love is as strong as death, jealousy is as severe as Sheol;*

1. PARALLELISM—DEATH AND SHEOL

- a. Love is like two things—that parallel one another
- b. Love is like death—and love is like Sheol = the grave that holds one forever

2. MEANING OF DEATH/SHEOL

- a. This is not about the result of death [destruction]
- b. But about the strength and persistent pursuit of death
- c. Death relentlessly pursues a person until victorious
- d. Sheol holds the person permanently in its grasp—the perspective of Solomon’s culture
- e. True love is analogous
 1. It pursues its victim until victorious
 2. And once victorious—never lets the loved on go
 3. Another translation—Love has a passion as fierce as death and the grave

3. MEANING OF JEALOUSY

- a. Jealousy can be negative and destructively possessive—the ‘green-eyed monster’
- b. Jealousy can be positive—strong emotional attachment
 1. Zeal—passion—intense desire for exclusive union
 2. Who wants a lover that does not care whether or not you love him/her?
- c. Jehovah expressed this kind of jealousy for Israel—Second Commandment

Ex 20:4-6—*You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.*

4. PARALLELISM—STRONG AND SEVERE

- a. Strong like death = irresistible assailant—or immovable defender
Hard—obstinate—inflexible
- b. Severe like Sheol = cruel
Fierce—unyielding (NIV)—relentless (JB) Also—fierce
- c. Strong and severe—used only here in this climactic passage of The Song
- d. The powerful and eternal nature of love
- e. Could even refer to the death-vanquishing power of her love
- f. Connected with jealousy—and vengeance elsewhere in the Bible

Anger and fiery zeal of Simeon and Levi—avenging sister Dinah—upon Shechem—**Gen 34**

Both adjectives used together in Jacob describing them—**Gen 49:7**

Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce; and their wrath, for it is cruel.

6c *its flashes are flashes of fire, the very flame of the Lord.*

1. ‘Flame of the Lord’—**shalhebethya**

- a. Word for flame adds suffix—which can make it possessive of Jahweh
- b. If translated this way—it is the only place in The Song that ‘God’ is mentioned
- c. Implication—even romantic love comes from God
 - Based on idea that all love is derived from true love from God—**αγαπη**—**I Jn 4:7**

2. Another possible translation

- a. Suffix can mean—superlative—most powerful or eternal flame
- b. Flame that cannot be extinguished
- c. A raging fire—so powerful—it cannot be controlled
- d. Emphasis might be not on destructive heat—but on **consuming** power of fire

3. Yet another translation

- a. Love is like a burning arrow—powerful as lightning
- b. Like one of Cupid’s arrows—that strikes its victim unawares

4. Hebrew text uses ‘sh’ sound throughout to imitate hissing sound of flames

Another possible translation of verse 6

**Write my name on your heart,
Keep yourself only for me,
For love is strong—as strong as death!
Just as Sheol will not give up its dead, nor shall we, our love!
Love’s arrows are fiery, like the fiercest of flames**

Connection between verses 6 and 7

- **The word love binds the two verses together**
- **The nature of true love is shown by shown by contrasting images—fire and water**
- **Parallelism in 6c matches that of 7a**

6c—Flashes are flashes of fire—the very flame

7a—Waters cannot quench—rivers cannot overflow

7a “Many waters cannot quench love, nor will rivers overflow it;

1. WATER IMAGERY OF VERSE 7—CONTRASTS WITH FLAME IMAGERY OF VERSE 6

2. MANY WATERS

- a. These are the ‘mighty waters’ of ‘chaos’
 - Primordial waters of the deep
 - Immense power—like that of a tidal surge
- b. Image is one of irresistible power and strength
- c. Love is even more powerful—and irresistible
 - Love can withstand even that kind of battering tide—with hurricane force
- d. Love is even more chaotic—in its surging passion

3. RIVERS

- a. These are the constantly flowing streams
 - The perennial—steady—ongoing flow
 - That can wear away the banks—erode—and dig deep valleys/canyons
- b. Love is impervious
 - It can withstand every erosive and corrosive power
 - Even the constant flowing rivers of adversity cannot wash it away

4. Hebrew text uses sounds like flowing water

5. Example—of contrast between **verses 6 and 7**

Eternal flame—fire of God—that resists the extinguishing waters of men

Like the waters on Elijah’s altar could not stop God’s flame—I Kgs 18:38

7b *if a man were to give all the riches of his house for love, it would be utterly despised.*”

1. BACKGROUND = *mohar* = ‘bride-price’

- Price paid by the groom to the bride, or her parents, for the marriage
- **Gen 34:2—Ex 22:16-17—Dt 20:7; 22:29—Hos 2:19-20**

2. SOLOMON HAD MANY WIVES FOR WHOM HE HAD PAID THE ‘BRIDE PRICE’

- Political reason—to cement treaties/alliances with surrounding nations

3. THE SHULAMITE VINEDRESSER'S PLEA

- a. This is artificial love
- b. They cannot make you love them because of monetary connections
- c. They cannot woo you with their amorous arts
- d. Love only me—the poor vinedresser who truly loves you—for the sake of true love

4. THE POINT: **TRUE LOVE CANNOT BE BOUGHT**

TRUE LOVE IS AN ACT OF GRACE—UNMERITED

GOD'S LOVE CANNOT BE EARNED—IT IS BY GRACE ALONE!