

SIMILE, IMAGERY, & THE SONG OF SONGS

Love Song for a Savior

OPENING POEM |

“THE BALLAD OF READING GAOL” -OSCAR WILDE (1854-1900)

With midnight always in one's heart,
And twilight in one's cell,
We turn the crank, or tear the rope,
Each in his separate Hell,
And the silence is more awful far
Than the sound of a brazen bell.

And never a human voice comes near
To speak a gentle word:
And the eye that watches through the door
Is pitiless and hard:
And by all forgot, we rot and rot,
With soul and body marred.

And thus we rust Life's iron chain
Degraded and alone:
And some men curse, and some men weep,
And some men make no moan:
But God's eternal Laws are kind
And break the heart of stone.

And every human heart that breaks,
In prison-cell or yard,
Is as that broken box that gave
Its treasure to the Lord,
And filled the unclean leper's house
With the scent of costliest nard.

SIMILE & METAPHOR

SIMILE

Comparison with “like” or “as”

Examples:

He roared like a lion.

He was as big as a bear.

METAPHOR

Comparison without “like” or “as”

Examples:

She was a cheetah, dashing across the field.

The curtain of night fell on the world.

WHY?

Artistry?

Explanation?

Expansion?

Effect?

TENOR & VEHICLE



TENOR & VEHICLE

She was a cheetah, dashing across the room.

He was as big as a bear.

SONG 1:9-10

I compare you, my love,
to a mare among Pharaoh's chariots.

Your cheeks are lovely with ornaments,
your neck with strings of jewels.

SONG 1:13-14

My beloved is to me a sachet of myrrh
that lies between my breasts.

My beloved is to me a cluster of henna blossoms
in the vineyards of Engedi.

IMAGERY |

IMAGERY

Evokes the senses

Often, simile and metaphor are forms of imagery.

PSALM 45:1-5

My heart overflows with a pleasing theme;
I address my verses to the king;
my tongue is like the pen of a ready scribe.

You are the most handsome of the sons of men;
grace is poured upon your lips;
therefore God has blessed you forever.

Gird your sword on your thigh, O mighty one,
in your splendor and majesty!

In your majesty ride out victoriously
for the cause of truth and meekness and
righteousness;
let your right hand teach you awesome deeds!

Your arrows are sharp
in the heart of the king's enemies;
the peoples fall under you.

THE SONG OF SONGS

INTRODUCTION

Wisdom Literature? Writings?

As with any book in the Bible, there is substantial debate over when it was written and by whom.

WHO WROTE IT?

Solomon?

- Who was Solomon?
- Why is he the traditionally-accepted author?

EXPLICIT, INTERNAL REFERENCES TO SOLOMON

The Song of Songs, which is Solomon's. (1:1)

...like the curtains of Solomon. (1:5)

Behold, it is the litter of Solomon! ... (3:7)

King Solomon made himself a carriage ... (3:9)

Go out, O daughters of Zion, and look upon King Solomon, ... (3:11)

Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-hamon; ... (8:11)

... you, O Solomon, may have the thousand, ... (8:12)

WHO WROTE IT?

Solomon? (Song of Songs 1:1)

Is the Author the same person as the man in the Song?

Is it written for one of Solomon's marriages by someone else?

Some mysterious other person?

WHEN WAS IT WRITTEN?

If Solomon wrote the Song, it was composed in the mid-tenth century.

Many scholars have argued that it was written after the exile, based on an original Song of Solomon which is now lost.

“The dating game as played with biblical books like Job and the Song of Songs, as well as with many of the Psalms, remains imprecise and the score is difficult to compute. There are grounds for both the oldest and the youngest estimates.”

-Marvin H. Pope, *Song of Songs: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 7c; Garden City: Doubleday, 1977) 27.

WHO IS THE WOMAN?

One of Solomon's 300 concubines? Probably not.

One of Solomon's 700 wives?

The Queen of Sheba? (1 Kings 10:1-13)

Pharaoh's Daughter? (1 Kings 9:16, 24)

The Shulammitte? (Song of Songs 6:13)

- If not, what does the word in 6:13 ("Shulamit") mean?
- *Shalom*? (Peace)
- Solomon?
- Jerusalem? (sometimes called "Salem")

Song of Songs 6:13

Friends

Come back,
come back, O Shulammitte;
come back,
come back, that we may gaze on you!

[S]He[?]

Why would you gaze on the Shulammitte
as on the dance of Mahanaim?

700 WIVES? 300 CONCUBINES? AN ASIDE: THE OT AND POLYGAMY

“When you come to the land that the LORD your God is giving you, and you possess it and dwell in it and then say, ‘I will set a king over me, like all the nations that are around me,’ you may indeed set a king over you whom the LORD your God will choose. One from among your brothers you shall set as king over you. You may not put a foreigner over you, who is not your brother. Only he must not acquire many horses for himself or cause the people to return to Egypt in order to acquire many horses, since the LORD has said to you, ‘You shall never return that way again.’ And he shall not acquire many wives for himself, lest his heart turn away, nor shall he acquire for himself excessive silver and gold.

(Deuteronomy 17:14-17)

700 WIVES? 300 CONCUBINES?

AN ASIDE: THE OT AND POLYGAMY

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(Deuteronomy 17:14-17 ESV)

700 WIVES? 300 CONCUBINES?

AN ASIDE: THE OT AND POLYGAMY

My dove, my perfect one, is the only one,
the only one of her mother,
pure to her who bore her.

The young women saw her and called her blessed;
the queens and concubines also, and they praised her.

(Song of Songs 6:9)

INTRODUCTION

God is probably* not even mentioned in the Song

* Some translate the last word of 8:6 as LORD / Yahweh.

HOW SHOULD WE READ THE SONG OF SONGS?

Allegory

Typology

PROBLEMS OF ALLEGORY/TYPOLOGY

What hermeneutical principle?

What ground rules?

Are we making it up?

Vs. Typology

(Is there something real behind this?)

HOW SHOULD WE READ THE SONG OF SONGS?

Allegory

Typology

Drama

Natural

Poetry

Do these labels even help?

SONG OF SONGS CHAPTER 2

SHE

I am a rose of Sharon,
a lily of the valleys.

HE

As a lily among brambles,
so is my love among the young women.

SHE

As an apple tree among the trees of the forest,
so is my beloved among the young men.

With great delight I sat in his shadow,
and his fruit was sweet to my taste.

He brought me to the banqueting house,
and his banner over me was love.

Sustain me with raisins;
refresh me with apples,

for I am sick with love.

His left hand is under my head,
and his right hand embraces me!

PARALLELISM

SHE

A I am a rose of Sharon,
A a lily of the valleys.

HE

B As a lily among brambles,
B so is my love among the young women.

SHE

C As an apple tree among the trees of the forest,
C so is my beloved among the young men.

With great delight I sat in his shadow, C
and his fruit was sweet to my taste. C

He brought me to the banqueting house, D
and his banner over me was love. D

Sustain me with raisins; E
refresh me with apples, E
for I am sick with love.

His left hand is under my head, D
and his right hand embraces me! D

SONG OF SONGS CHAPTER 2:1-6

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METAPHOR

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ROSE OF SHARON, LILY OF THE VALLEYS FLOWERS AND FAUNA IN THE BIBLE

Asphodel?



Lily?



~~ROSE~~ ASPHODEL OF SHARON, LILY OF THE VALLEYS? FLOWERS AND FAUNA IN THE BIBLE

Asphodel?



Lily?



METAPHOR, SIMILE

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and his right hand embraces me!

SONG OF SONGS CHAPTER 2:7-9

I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem,
by the gazelles or the does of the field,

that you not stir up or awaken love
until it pleases.

The voice of my beloved!

Behold, he comes,

leaping over the mountains,
bounding over the hills.

My beloved is like a gazelle
or a young stag.

Behold, there he stands
behind our wall,

gazing through the windows,
looking through the lattice.

BBC



METAPHOR, SIMILE, IMAGERY

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SONG OF SONGS CHAPTER 2:10-15

My beloved speaks and says to me:

“Arise, my love, my beautiful one,
and come away,

for behold, the winter is past;
the rain is over and gone.

The flowers appear on the earth,
the time of singing has come,

and the voice of the turtledove
is heard in our land.

The fig tree ripens its figs,
and the vines are in blossom;
they give forth fragrance.

Arise, my love, my beautiful one,
and come away.

O my dove, in the clefts of the rock,
in the crannies of the cliff,

let me see your face,
let me hear your voice,

for your voice is sweet,
and your face is lovely.

Catch the foxes for us,
the little foxes

that spoil the vineyards,
for our vineyards are in blossom.”

METAPHOR, SIMILE, IMAGERY

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SONG OF SONGS CHAPTER 2:16-17

My beloved is mine, and I am his;
he grazes among the lilies.

Until the day breathes
and the shadows flee,

turn, my beloved, be like a gazelle
or a young stag on cleft mountains.

METAPHOR, SIMILE, IMAGERY

My beloved is mine, and I am his;
he grazes among the lilies. } ??

Until the day breathes
and the shadows flee, } ??

turn, my beloved, be like a gazelle
or a young stag on cleft mountains.

WHERE DOES THE SIMILE STOP?

Fruit and Gazelles

Ch. 2

&

Ch. 8

IS THIS ABOUT THE CHURCH OR THE INDIVIDUAL?

CLOSING POEM |

“THE BALLAD OF READING GAOL” -OSCAR WILDE (1854-1900)

Ah! happy they whose hearts can break
And peace of pardon win!
How else may man make straight his plan
And cleanse his soul from Sin?
How else but through a broken heart
May Lord Christ enter in?

And he of the swollen purple throat,
And the stark and staring eyes,
Waits for the holy hands that took
The Thief to Paradise;
And a broken and a contrite heart
The Lord will not despise.

The man in red who reads the Law
Gave him three weeks of life,
Three little weeks in which to heal
His soul of his soul's strife,
And cleanse from every blot of blood
The hand that held the knife.

And with tears of blood he cleansed the hand,
The hand that held the steel:
For only blood can wipe out blood,
And only tears can heal:
And the crimson stain that was of Cain
Became Christ's snow-white seal.