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ABSTRACT

THE WATCHMEN IN THE SONG OF SONGS: AN INTERTEXTUAL STUDY

By

Gabriel Del Valle

Advisor: Richard M. Davidson

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Thesis

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: THE WATCHMEN IN THE SONG OF SONGS: AN INTERTEXTUAL STUDY

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Date completed: March 2024

Problem

The watchmen are a shocking feature in the Song of Songs that have received limited exploration and research. Their dual nature in the Song of Songs is illustrated by their two responses to the women in the song; benign indifference illustrated in Song of Songs 3:1-5 and hostility exemplified in Song of Songs 5:2-8. This has led to a myriad of interpretations regarding their function and identity; however, none have been subject to a thorough examination. The watchmen have not been previously investigated as a potential metaphorical or

symbolic representation of the brothers related to the woman in the Song of Songs. The goal of this study is to determine if such a relationship between these two entities is plausible.

Method

The investigation will initially seek to determine the range of meanings, semantic domains, and the Hebrew term for watchmen in the Song of Songs to serve as a basis for the comparison between the watchmen and the brothers. Further, it will identify actions and characteristics of the watchmen and brothers, as expressed by key words and phrases, so that parallel passages in the wider MT canon can be identified, interpreted, and compared. Ultimately, it will present a theory as to the relationship between the watchmen and the brothers.

Results

The present investigation has discovered a significant overlap between the semantic domains of the “watchmen” and the “brothers” in their identification as guardians and antagonists. It also outlines thematic connections that they share in the Song of Songs, specifically in how they relate to the woman of the Song. However, the investigation does not provide a definitive answer concerning the relationship between the watchmen and the brothers, as the text of the Song of Songs does not provide a metaphor or a statement that explicitly connects them together. Thus, any connection can only be inferred through shared linguistic and thematic features.

Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

THE WATCHMEN IN THE SONG OF SONGS: AN INTERTEXTUAL STUDY

A Thesis
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in Religion

By
Gabriel Xavier Del Valle

2024

THE WATCHMEN IN THE SONG OF SONGS: AN INTERTEXTUAL STUDY

A thesis
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Of the requirements for the degree
Master of Arts

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Gabriel Del Valle

APPROVAL BY THE COMMITTEE:

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	List of Abbreviations.....	IV
Chapter		
I.	INTRODUCTION.....	1
	Thesis Statement.....	3
	Structure of the Song of Songs.....	3
	Literature Review.....	10
	Methodology.....	21
II.	TRANSLATION OF WATCHMEN AND BROTHER TEXTS IN THE SONG OF SONGS.....	25
	Song 3:1-5.....	25
	Song 5:2-8.....	32
	The Brothers in the Song of Songs.....	34
III.	LEXICAL AND SEMANTIC STUDY OF שמר, ITS SYNONYMS, AND GREEK TRANSLATIONS.....	41
	שמר.....	41
	נטר.....	43
IV.	PARALLEL PASSAGES IN THE WIDER MT CANON	48
	Parallel Passages in the Wider MT Canon Concerning the Brothers.....	54
V.	RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE WATCHMEN AND BROTHERS	60
	BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	69

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>AB</i>	<i>Anchor Bible</i>
<i>AIL</i>	<i>Ancient Israel and Its Literature</i>
<i>ANE</i>	<i>Ancient Near East</i>
<i>BN</i>	<i>Biblische Notizen</i>
<i>BSac</i>	<i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i>
<i>CBR</i>	<i>Currents in Biblical Research</i>
<i>CHANE</i>	<i>Culture and History of the Ancient Near East</i>
<i>DSS</i>	<i>Dead Sea Scrolls</i>
<i>ESV</i>	<i>English Standard Version</i>
<i>HALOT</i>	<i>Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i>
<i>JQR</i>	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
<i>LXX</i>	<i>Septuagint Text</i>
<i>MT</i>	<i>Masoretic Text</i>
<i>NASB</i>	<i>New American Standard Bible</i>
<i>NICOT</i>	<i>New International Commentary on the Old Testament</i>
<i>PRSt</i>	<i>Perspectives in Religious Studies</i>
<i>SBL</i>	<i>Society of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>TOTC</i>	<i>Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries</i>
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Song of Songs has captured the minds and imaginations of numerous expositors throughout the centuries and has confounded the minds of many as to the interpretation of its details. One such detail that appears in Song of Songs 3:1-5 and 5:2-8 are the “watchmen.” This group has been interpreted in a myriad of ways—falling into two primary categories—literal “watchmen” patrolling a literal city, and symbolic “watchmen” as representations of another entity or ideal. The connections suggested by the Septuagint with Song of Songs 1:6 and 8:11-12 have not been systematically explored and will form a major part of the present investigation. When translating the words for “watchmen” in Song 3:1-5 and 5:2-8, the LXX offers different Greek translations for the Hebrew words שמר and נטר. Below is a side-by-side comparison of the relevant texts in the LXX and MT with the corresponding Greek and Hebrew words printed in bold.

Septuagint

Song of Songs 1:6

μη βλέψητέ με ὅτι ἐγὼ εἶμι μεμελανωμένη ὅτι
παρέβλεψέν με ὁ ἥλιος υἱοὶ μητρός μου
ἐμαχέσαντο ἐν ἐμοί ἔθεντό με **φυλάκισσαν** ἐν
ἀμπελῶσιν ἀμπελῶνα ἐμὸν οὐκ **ἐφύλαξα**

Song of Songs 3:3

εὔροσάν με **οἱ τηροῦντες** οἱ κυκλοῦντες ἐν τῇ
πόλει μη ὄν ἠγάπησεν ἡ ψυχὴ μου εἶδετε

Song of Songs 5:7

εὔροσάν με **οἱ φύλακες** οἱ κυκλοῦντες ἐν τῇ
πόλει ἐπάταξάν με ἐτραυμάτισάν με ἦραν τὸ
θέριστρόν μου ἀπ' ἐμοῦ **φύλακες** τῶν τειχέων

Masoretic Text

Song of Songs 1:6

אַל־תִּראוּנִי שְׂאֲנִי שְׁחַחְרַחַרְתְּ שֶׁשָּׁזַפְתָּנִי הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ בְּנִי אָמִי
גַחְרַרְבִי שְׁמִנִי **נִטְרָה** אֶת־הַפְּרָמִים פְּרָמִי שְׁלִי לֹא **נִטְרָתִי**:

Song of Songs 3:3

מִצְאוּנִי הַשְּׁמָרִים הַסֹּבְבִים בְּעִיר אֶת שְׂאֵהָבָה נִפְשִׁי
רְדִידִי מֵעַלִי שְׁמָרֵי הַחַמּוֹת:

Song of Songs 5:7

מִצְאוּנִי הַשְּׁמָרִים הַסֹּבְבִים בְּעִיר הַכּוֹנֵי פִצְעוּנִי נִשְׂאוּ אֶת־
רְדִידִי מֵעַלִי שְׁמָרֵי הַחַמּוֹת:

Song of Songs 8:11-12

ἀμπελών ἐγενήθη τῷ Σαλωμων ἐν Βεελαμων
ἔδωκεν τὸν ἀμπελῶνα αὐτοῦ **τοῖς τηροῦσιν**
ἀνὴρ οἴσει ἐν καρπῷ αὐτοῦ χιλίους ἀργυρίου

ἀμπελών μου ἐμὸς ἐνώπιόν μου οἱ χίλιοι σοί
Σαλωμων καὶ οἱ διακόσιοι **τοῖς τηροῦσι** τὸν
καρπὸν αὐτοῦ

Song of Songs 8:11-12

כָּרֶם הָיָה לְשִׁלְמָה בְּבַעַל הַמֶּזֶק נָתַן אֶת־הַכָּרֶם לְנֹטְרִים
אִישׁ יָבֵא בְּכַרְיוֹ אֶלֶף כֶּסֶף:

כָּרְמִי שְׁלִי לְפָנַי הָאֵלֶּף לָךְ שְׁלֵמָה וּמְאַתָּים לְנֹטְרִים אֶת־
כָּרְמִי:

In the MT, שמר and נטר belong to parallel passages in the greater context of the Song of Songs. In Song 1:6 and 8:11-12 נטר forms an inclusio, where both passages contain parallel elements. These include references to brothers, sisters, vineyards, and watchmen, at the beginning and end of the Song. While שמר in Song of Songs 3:1-5 and 5:2-8 form a panel parallelism on opposite ends of the wedding song in Song of Songs 4. Both passages are nearly identical, containing the same characters and setting,

In contrast, the LXX connects Song of Songs 1:5 with 5:7 which offers the Greek word τηρεω as a translation for נטר and שמר respectively. Song 3:3 connects to 8:11-12 by using φυλασσω which presents the two passages as parallel. This diverges from the parallelism presented by the MT and could indicate a difference in the Hebrew Vorlage behind the LXX. These divergences could also reflect the translator’s understanding of the book. On their surface, these passages seem to share similar elements. Song of Songs 1:5 and 5:2 both contain violent action perpetrated by multiple male characters against the female character of the Song; resulting in the female being physically affected and separated from her male lover due to their actions. By contrast, Song of Songs 3:3 and 8:11-12 have a distinct lack of violence against the female character of the Song which results in the fulfillment of her desire to be reunited with her beloved, and the maintenance of her own vineyard.

Based on this surface reading, I believe that these connections warrant further investigation. These findings could potentially shed light on the identity and function of the “watchmen” and their possible connection to the brothers of the woman displayed in the Song of Songs.

Thesis Statement

The purpose of this thesis is to determine the identity and function of the שמרים "watchmen" in Song of Songs 3:1-5 and 5:2-8. Moreover, the aim is to explore the “brothers” as their possible identity through a lexical investigation of שמר, its Hebrew synonym גטר, and Greek translations. I also intend to examine the “watchmen” and “brothers” texts in the Song to evaluate textual parallels in the wider MT, through intertextual analysis. The methodology employed seeks to identify lexical, syntactical, and thematic characteristics in the “watchmen” and “brothers” passages of the Song to use as search terms and phrases to find parallels in the wider MT canon. These parallels will be compared to the texts in the Song that are under investigation with the intent of illuminating the actions of the “watchmen” and brothers.” Ultimately, this will determine the nature of the relationship between the “watchmen” and “brothers” of the Song of Songs.

Structure of the Song of Songs

There has been extensive debate concerning the literary structure of the Song of Songs, and how this structure is ascertained based on various elements that are uncovered in the text. This is important because the location of the examined passages—Song 3:1-5 and 5:2-8—in the larger macro-structure of the Song of Songs, greatly affects their interpretation and helps to

determine any relation between them and the brothers in the text. For the purpose of this thesis, I will present three approaches to the literary structure of the book that I believe accurately encapsulate the range of views intertwined with a brief discussion of the usefulness of each.

Richard M. Davidson observes:

A number of modern studies point to strong evidence within the contents of the Song itself of its integral unity, rather than its being a collection of unrelated love poems. For example, Roland Murphy points to recurring refrains, themes, words, phrases, and elements of dialogical structure; J. Cheryl Exum analyzes numerous stylistic and structural indications of “a unity of authorship with an intentional design, and a sophistication of poetic style”; and Michael Fox elaborates on four factors that point to a literary unity: (1) a network of repetitions, (2) associative sequences, (3) consistency of character portrayal, and (4) narrative framework. Finally, several recent literary-structural analyses point to an overarching literary structure for the entire Song.¹

According to Davidson, the Song of Song is a literary unity with various connections throughout the poem that draw together its themes, characters, and symbolism. He argues that the Song has a chiasmic structure of twelve macro units that make up the body of the Song.

A 1:2–2:7 Mutual Love

B 2:8–17 Coming and Going

C 3:1–5 Dream I: Lost and Found

D 3:6–11 Praise of Groom, I

E 4:1–7 Praise of Bride, I

F 4:8–15 Praise of Bride, II

G 4:16 Invitation by Bride

G' 5:1 Acceptance of Invitation by Groom and Divine Approbation

C' 5:2–8 Dream II: Found and Lost

D' 5:9–6:3 Praise of Groom, II

E' 6:4–12 Praise of Bride, III

F' 7:1 [Eng. 6:13]–10 [Eng. 9] Praise of Bride, IV

B' 7:11 [Eng. 10]–8:2 Going and Coming

A' 8:3–14 Mutual Love²

¹ Richard M. Davidson, “The Literary Structure of the Song of Songs *Redivivus*,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 14/2 (2003): 45.

² Davidson, “The Literary Structure,” 50.

Davidson further elaborates that “the various sections of the literary macrostructure are connected in a parallelism of theme, terminology, and structural devices.” Thematically, each letter corresponds to a specific feature that is shared between it and its counterpart in the latter half of the poem. For example, “members A and A´ describe various features of mutual love; B and B´ highlight the coming and going of the lovers; C and C´ are most probably dreams” etc.³ This literary structure provides a strong case for the literary unity of the Song and invites the comparison of related chiasmic parallels for the purpose of interpretation. The only caveat is that, depending on the view of the interpreter, any given number of elements in the Song could be understood to witness to alternative chiasmic structures.

Gordon H. Johnston argues that the Song of Songs should be considered an “Anthology of Poems” that have been compiled into a larger body of work. He argues this through an investigation of the Songs’ usage of various refrains and panels. These include: the romance refrain, adjuration refrain, mutual possession refrain, gazelle refrain, admiration refrain, and the query refrain. These refrains play an “important role as a structuring device that determines the framework of poems in which it occurs.”⁴ In other words, refrains delineate the boundaries of a given section of poetry and provide structure to the larger poetic work. An example of his structuring of the Song of Songs, based on what he classes as double refrains, is included below.

- A. eight individual poems (1:2-2:5)
double refrain: romantic embrace (2:6) +
adjuration to daughters (2:7)

- B. four individual poems (2:8-15)
double refrain: mutual possession (2:16) +
perfumed mountains (2:17)

³ Davidson, “The Literary Structure,” 51.

⁴ Gordon H. Johnston, “The Enigmatic Genre and Structure of the Song of Songs, Part 3,” *BSac* 166 (July-September 2009): 290.

- A. two individual poems (7:12-8:2)
double refrain: romantic embrace (8:3) +
adjuration to daughters (8:4)

- B. four individual poems (8:5-12)
double refrain: maiden's voice (8:13; cf. 2:14) +
perfumed mountains (8:14)⁵

Parallel panels, another type of poetic refrain, occur “when two sections of a poem closely mirror each other. The most widely recognized set of parallel panels is the two putative dream scenes in 3:1-5 and 5:2-8. Each develops a poetic story in which the maiden seeks her beloved in the middle of the night.” This pattern of recurring parallel panels suggests that “the Song unfolds in a cyclical rather than a linear manner.” Instead of following a linear storyline—including a beginning, middle and end— “the Song swells over and over itself. Like a jewel of many facets, it celebrates the vibrancy of love in a way that imitates the repeated experiences that the two lovers share in their idyllic romance.”⁶

For Gordon, the existence of the repeated refrains and poetic parallels are not evidence of a literary unity. He concludes:

These two literary features (poetic refrains and parallel panels) intricately knit together the individual poems and larger poetic units into a literary masterpiece. The poetic refrains and parallel panels suggest that the Song is not a literary drama or poetic narrative, but an artistically designed collection of love poems. Sensitivity to its literary texture should caution interpreters from forcing an artificial storyline on the book. The reader may be content to enjoy each individual love poem on its own terms, as well as the ebb and flow of the recurrent themes that resurface time and again.⁷

I agree to Gordon’s point that distinctive consideration should be attributed to the refrains and panels in the Song of Songs because knowing when a given section of poetry ends and

⁵ Johnston, “The Enigmatic Genre,” 297.

⁶ Johnston, “The Enigmatic Genre,” 302-305.

⁷ Johnston, “The Enigmatic Genre,” 305.

begins can assist in the text’s interpretive process. However, I find Gordon’s argument insinuating that the Song of Songs is merely an anthology of unconnected poems to be unconvincing. In the text, the use of poetic refrains and parallel panels can certainly be admitted as evidence for the unity of the Song of Songs.

Micha Roi argues that the Song of Songs should be understood as a narrative work with a setting, plot, and characters with various motivations and conflicts. This requires a “new sectionalization based on a fixed, recurrent pattern, the maiden addressing the maidens of Jerusalem at the beginning of these and her beloved at their conclusion.”⁸ He suggests the following structure of the Song of Songs:

<i>Section</i>	<i>Address to the maidens of Jerusalem</i>	<i>Address to the beloved</i>
1,2-17	I am dark, but comely, <i>O maidens of Jerusalem</i> (1,5)	And you, <i>my beloved</i> , are handsome (1,16)
2,1-17	I adjure you, <i>O maidens of Jerusalem</i> ...Do not wake or rouse... (2,7)	Set out, <i>my beloved</i> , swift as a gazelle (2,17) (separation)
3,1-5,1	I adjure you, <i>O maidens of Jerusalem</i> ...Do not wake or rouse... (3,5)	Let <i>my beloved</i> come to his garden (4,16) (connection)
5,2-7,14	I adjure you, <i>O maidens of Jerusalem</i> ...I am faint with love... (5,8)	Come, <i>my beloved</i> , let us go into the open (7,12) (connection)
8,1-14	I adjure you, <i>O maidens of Jerusalem</i> : Do not wake or rouse... (8,4)	Hurry, <i>my beloved</i> (8,14) (separation) ⁹

Similarly to Davidson and Johnston, Roi divides the Song into sections based on recurring refrains that are identified in the text; emphasizing the refrains where the woman addresses the other maidens and her beloved. This outlines the independent narrative sections of the Song as well as the larger macro narrative.

⁸ Micha Roi, “Psalmodic Form and Wisdom Content: A New Literary Reading of the Song of Songs,” *BN* 194 (2022): 92.

⁹ Micha Roi, “Psalmodic Form and Wisdom Content,” 92.

Roi argues that the process of dividing each section into individual songs is based on various factors. These include: a change of speaker, addressee, subject, timeframe, or speakers' conscious state, *Leitworten*, "terms belonging to a common semantic field, formal or stylistic devices that occur in a specific unit but not in those preceding or following it," a song enclosed in an *inclusio*, and structural factors within the songs in a section or paralleling those in others.¹⁰ Roi concludes that "analysis of the poems that comprise each of the five sections reveals that each is arranged in accordance with the five stages characteristic of brief narratives in line with Aristotle's model: a) exposition; b) complication; c) turning point; d) resolution; and e) conclusion."¹¹ Viewing the Song in this context allows the reader to discern the plot in a given section of the Song as well as the overarching plot and message of the Song itself.

An example of this method applied to Song of Songs chapter 1 is included below.

<i>Stage</i>	<i>Verses</i>	<i>Key Sentences</i>	<i>Content</i>
Exposition	2-4	The king has brought me	The maiden dreams of
	5-6	into his chambers My own vineyard I did not guard	entering a relationship She announces her intention to realize her love
Complication	7-8	Let me not be as one who strays beside the flocks of your fellows ... Go follow ... graze your kids	She seeks intimacy but he rejects her
Turning Point	9-11	I have likened you, my darling, to a mare in Pharaoh's chariotry	He falls in love and pursues closeness
Resolution	12-14	My beloved to me is ... from the vineyards of Ein Gedi	Once again, she declares her love
Conclusion	15-17	Cedars are the beams of our house	Partnership and the building of a joint house. ¹²

¹⁰ Micha Roi, "Psalmic Form and Wisdom Content," 93.

¹¹ Micha Roi, "Psalmic Form and Wisdom Content," 93.

¹² Micha Roi, "Psalmic Form and Wisdom Content," 96.

Roi's method is commendable in its sensitivity to some aspects of the Song of Songs and its dedication to attempting to identify an overarching plot for the Song. However, his reliance on an Aristotelian model of narrative construction tends to force the Song to conform to a structure that is foreign to it, and it is often unclear how the author arrives at his interpretive conclusions. For example, for the complication section in his outline of Song 1, he suggests that verses 7-8 show the male lover rejecting the advances of the woman when she asks him where he will pasture his sheep. The response of the man expressing, "if you do not know, go in the footsteps of the flocks and pasture your own kids," is taken as a rejection. However, I view this as the man answering the woman's question and alerting her as to where he can be found. I do not see any rejection on his part, but perhaps a hint of playfulness.¹³

So, which structural model is the best for understanding the Song of Songs? With Davidson, I agree that the Song of Songs has a chiasmic structure where various elements throughout the Song reference and mirror others—specifically seen in Song 3:1-5 and 5:2-8. With Johnston, I agree that the various refrains serve as guideposts to determine where a given section of poetry ends and where the macro poetic connections are located. With Roi, I agree the Song of Songs has an overarching narrative and that various sections of the text also have a narrative flavor.

For the purpose of this thesis, I consider the Song of Songs to have a chiasmic structure evidenced by the various refrains and parallel panels found therein, and that the poem as a whole and Song 3:1-5 and 5:2-8 in particular have a narrative flavor. Having this in mind will be useful in situating Song 3:1-5 and 5:2-8 in the larger structure of the Song of Songs, thereby assisting in the interpretation of these two passages.

¹³ J. Cheryl Exum, *Song of Songs: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 106.

Literature Review

Before beginning my analysis, I believe it is pertinent to survey the scholarly landscape for interpretations of the watchmen and the brothers that are found in the Song of Songs. In my perusal of scholarly literature, I have found that there are three basic approaches to the Song of Songs: the allegorical/symbolic, typological, and literal methods. These methods of interpretation are not monolithic, and various other opinions fall along the spectrum from symbolic to literal. The goal is not necessarily to settle on a specific model but to evaluate the basic arguments of each through the presentation of various exemplars and to see the usefulness of each approach to my thesis.

The Allegorical/Symbolic Model of Interpretation

The first interpretive approach is the allegorical/symbolic model. This model suggests that the Song of Songs is a historical allegory that recounts the actions of God throughout the history of Israel/the Church. There are other symbolic interpretations of the Song of Songs that do not connect the actions and images in the Song to the wider history of Israel and the early Christian church. Given the oblique nature of allegory/symbolism, this method can provide a wide range of interpretations. In Song 3:1-5 and 5:2-8 there are numerous allegorical interpretations that are attached to the various images that appear in these two parallel scenes. Marvin Pope points out that the ancient Jewish interpreters believed that the watchmen in Song 3:1-5 refer to Moses, Aaron, and the Levites.

Said the Assembly of Israel: Moses and Aaron and the Levities, who keep watch of the Word of the Appointment-Tent and who surround it round about, met me, and I asked them about the Glorious Presence of YHWH which had been removed from me. Moses, the great Scribe of Israel, answered and said: I will ascend to the high(est) heaven and

pray before YHWH: perhaps He will forgive your guilt and make His Presence dwell among you as before.¹⁴

It is inferred that these ancient interpreters saw a similarity of function between Moses, Aaron, the Levites, and the Watchmen in that these individuals or groups were responsible for overseeing a specified group of people. The watchmen were responsible for the people of the city and Moses, Aaron, and the Levites represented the spiritual integrity of Israel. This guarding function also appears to include the role of mediator. As Moses was responsible for mediating between Israel and God, likewise the watchmen assist the woman of the Song when she asks for help.

Ancient Jewish expositors also provided allegorical explanations for the watchmen in Song of Songs 5:2-8. They suggested that the watchmen in this passage should be identified as the Chaldeans during their siege of Jerusalem.

The Chaldeans, those who guard the roads, seized me and pressed me round about the city of Jerusalem, part of me they killed by the sword and part of me they carried into captivity. They lifted the royal crown off the neck of Zedekiah King of Judah, and they brought Him to Riblah and they put out his eyes, the people of Babylon who harassed the city and watched the walls.¹⁵

This scene is decidedly more violent than the previous one, and the ancient expositors saw it as military action that had been perpetrated against Israel during its invasion by Babylon. This specific interpretation alludes to a different function that watchmen have in relation to a city. These watchmen are not guardians of a city, but a hostile force arrayed against it.

Marvin Pope also explains that Midrash Rabbah in its interpretation of this passage took the events described therein as divine punishment brought about as a result of sin. The city patrol was taken to refer “to Tattenai and his associates (Ezra 5) and the wounding to the accusation

¹⁴ Marvin H. Pope, *Song of Songs: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 7C (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 420.

¹⁵ Marvin H. Pope, *Song of Songs*, 528.

they wrote against Judah and Jerusalem (Ezra 4:7).” The interpretation of the watchmen as the Tribe of Levi is maintained and they serve similarly to their role in Song 3:1-5. The ךָדִינִי “my veil,” taken from the woman by the watchmen, “was explained as weapons inscribed with the Ineffable Name which God had given the Israelites at Horeb. After Israel sinned, the Name was removed.” The watchmen are interpreted as a positive force in the sense that they were correcting negative action and are also envisioned as “those who keep the walls of the Torah (i.e. who expounded and administer it).”¹⁶

Early Christian expositors also held an allegorical view of the Song of Songs, the main difference being that the Christian church replaced Israel as the subject of the Song. According to Pope, some of these expositors identified the “watchmen” in 5:2-8 to be the “pagan Roman rulers who persecuted the Church and stripped the Martyrs of the outer veil of flesh which covered their souls.” For others, the veil that was removed from the woman by the watchmen was explained as “the external aids of religion taken away when the priests were imprisoned, altars torn down, and Scriptures burned.” The city in this passage is “taken to mean the whole world, the watchmen were explained as the evil spirits who prowl the earth wounding souls, stripping them of their faith.”¹⁷

Other Early Christian Expositors interpreted the “watchmen” in this chapter in a favorable sense. Marvin Pope comments:

The Guardian Angels entrusted with the care of souls smite them with the sword of the Word of God and with tribulations and wound them with love, taking away the veil of carnal thoughts and habits which obscure the vision of the mind. Or the watchmen as the Apostles and Evangelists found the Jewish Church vainly seeking Christ and they wounded them with words and took away the veil of the ceremonial Law which lay on their hearts and hid from them the light of God’s face.¹⁸

¹⁶ Marvin H. Pope, *Song of Songs*, 528.

¹⁷ Marvin H. Pope, *Song of Songs*, 528.

¹⁸ Marvin H. Pope, *Song of Songs*, 528.

For these interpreters, the violent action of the “watchmen” represented a corrective force that assists the believer in maintaining their faithfulness to God.

Song of Songs 1:6, where the brothers first appear in the Song, also produced allegorical interpretations that attempted to explain the conflict between them and their sister. “The anger of ‘my mother’s sons’ was applied in Jewish allegory to Dathan and Abiram who informed against Moses when he slew the Egyptian.” On the other hand, “Christians related it to the persecution of the Primitive Church by the Church’s mother, the Synagogue, or to the Judaizing party within the Church.”¹⁹

The speakers in Song 8:8 who say, “we have a little sister” were identified in some ancient Jewish traditions as referring to God speaking on behalf of Israel.

Rabbi Azariah identified her (the little sister) with Israel. The princes (i.e. the guardian angels) of the nations will accuse Israel before the Holy One of idolatry, lewdness and bloodshed. And the Holy One will respond, “we have a little sister”: as a child is not reprovved because he is a child so Israel may be defiled by iniquities throughout the year. But the Day of Atonement comes and atones for them.²⁰

For the ancient Christian interpreters, there was a greater variety of thought regarding the identity of the speakers in Song 8:8. “The Greeks generally attributed it to the Bride and the Latins to the Bridegroom. Ambrose ascribed the words to the daughters of Jerusalem and Theodoret to the Saints of the Old Testament.”²¹

From the examples provided, it is apparent that the Ancient Jewish and Christian interpreters, highlighted an allegorical interpretation of the events in the Song of Songs.

Although the allegorical interpretations vary, it appears that they are at least partially based on an

¹⁹ Marvin H. Pope, *Song of Songs*, 323.

²⁰ Marvin H. Pope, *Song of Songs*, 679.

²¹ Marvin H. Pope, *Song of Songs*, 679

understood meaning of “watchmen,” which, according to them, includes a protective as well as an adversarial function. How they came to their specific interpretations is not clear.

Song of Songs as a Dream Allegory

A subset of the allegorical method is the recognition and interpretation of the Song of Songs as a collection of dreams. Solomon B. Freehof suggests that the dream-like nature of the Song explains the propensity for ancient Jewish and Christian interpreters to view it as a historical allegory because dreams are naturally given to symbolic interpretation. In his interpretation of Song of Songs 5:2-8 Freehof offers an example of the dream-like nature of the Song.

The key to the suggested interpretation is Chapter 5, verse 2: “I am asleep but my heart is awake.” The “heart” here means the intelligence, the mind. For the body to be asleep and the mind to be active means simply to dream. The female speaker is saying: “I am asleep, but I am dreaming.” (cf. Budde: in Marti *Handkommentar* and Ehrlich as to this passage). This statement introduces a passage which is clearly the description of the dream.²²

In this passage, Freehof points out a “dream identifier,” which for him indicates that the events that follow in this passage happen while the woman is asleep. After detailing the events that happen in the rest of the passage, he goes on to argue that as a “description of actual events, the scene makes little sense,” but as a dream it appears to make sense. She hears the knock of her beloved at the door and at the moment that she goes to open her door, “she experiences her helplessness.” Her desire has come true, yet she is unable to take advantage of it. “The beloved appears to pop in and out of existence mysteriously appearing and vanishing. The dreamer then runs through the streets naked, which is frequently found in dreams.”²³ These characteristics

²² Solomon B. Freehof, “The Song of Songs: A General Suggestion,” *JQR* 39 (1949): 399.

²³ Solomon B. Freehof, “The Song of Songs: A General Suggestion,” *JQR* 39 (1949): 399.

attest to the dream like nature of Song of Songs 5:2-8 and for Freehof they are not limited to just this passage.

Another major characteristic of dream literature is the rapid succession of separate scenes. “The Shulammite begins her journey in the king’s palace, and suddenly she is returned to her home where she dreams of him, then she sees the summer pavilion of the king; and finally, she sees the king’s garden and his vineyard at Baal Hamon.”²⁴ The quick succession of these scenes has defied all attempts to arrange them into a logical sequence. But in a dream, it is normal for one scene to rapidly follow another, vividly, and in a sequence that is hard to explain.

Freehof then concludes by offering his interpretation of Song of Songs 5:2-8 in light of his identification of the passage as a recounted dream.

As in a dream the beloved are parted, lost to each other, seeking each other; so God seeks Israel, but Israel seems lost from His presence. Then Israel, in repentance, seeks God and God seems far away. Finally they find each other for “Many waters cannot quench out love nor the floods overwhelm it.” Israel is forever united with God. “I am my beloved’s and He is mine.” No wonder this interpretation of a dream, God’s communication to man, was described by Akibah as Holy of Holies. The dream is the outcome of longing and desire expressed in symbolic scenes and actions. Therefore, whether the specific interpretation given by tradition is correct or not, the approach of tradition, namely, to explain this sequence of dreams symbolically, is essentially sound.²⁵

For Freehof, interpreting the Song as a dream lends credence to the method of the ancient allegorizers, even if their interpretations were incorrect. Freehof’s classification of the Song of Songs as dream literature rests upon the assumption that the various references to beds, lying down, sleeping, and the supposed incongruity of the text indicate a dream-like quality of the contents of the Song. However, Given the erotic nature of the book, these references could readily refer to sexual activity. Furthermore, although there are allusions in the Song to other sections of the wider MT canon that refer to the history of Israel, I would argue that it is an

²⁴ Freehof, “The Song of Songs,” 399-400.

²⁵ Freehof, “The Song of Songs,” 402.

overreach to assume that the contents of the Song necessarily describe these events in an allegorical way.

Non-Allegorical Symbolic Interpretation

As mentioned earlier in the literature review, there are other symbolic approaches to the Song of Songs that do not connect its events and images to the history of Israel and the early Christian Church by way of allegory. Duane Garret, who does not view the Song of Songs as a historical allegory, offers an example of a symbolic interpretation of the watchmen in Song of Songs 3:3. He states,

We have reason to suppose that the guards represent the virginity of the woman. An ancient city was a “virgin” (cf. Lam 2:13; Isa 47:1). The woman of the Song, moreover, is characterized as a city (Song 6:4, where she is compared to Tirzah and Jerusalem). For an ancient reader, conditioned to think of a young marriageable woman in terms of her virginity, the notion that the “guards” of the “city” represent the woman’s virginity would not be far-fetched at all. In light of 5:7, it is fairly certain that the guards represent her virginity. It simply makes no sense to have a love song in which the leading lady is physically assaulted. More than that, no one in the Song finds it surprising that the woman has been beaten; the Song implies no astonishment or outrage at the event. The “guards” themselves are strikingly impersonal...The account is not coherent unless the suffering she received from the guards itself is symbolic and represents something else.²⁶

Like the allegorical approaches mentioned earlier, Garret sees the watchmen in the Song as representations of something else. In this case, they represent the concept of virginity and not literal watchmen interacting with a literal woman. The text then becomes a type of metaphor for the mental state of the woman—characterized as anxiety—as the woman undergoes the process of preparing for marriage. “Alone at night, she yearns for her lover, as she searches for him

²⁶ Duane A. Garrett and Paul R. House, *Song of Songs, Lamentations*. The Word Biblical Commentary 23B (Nashville; London: Thomas Nelson, 2004), 172.

mentally contemplating a physical relationship with him. During this process she confronts her own virginity in the form of the watchmen.”²⁷

Denis F. Kinlaw in a similar fashion suggests a symbolic interpretation of the watchmen in Song of Songs 5:7.

The bride’s remorse and her love drive her out into the darkened city to seek her groom (v.7). The watchmen find her just as they did in 3:1-5. This time they are hostile. They beat, wound, and shame her. Does this treatment by the watchmen reflect the girl’s guilt and sense of failure at the slowness of her response to her husband...The course of true love seldom runs smoothly for long. For every moment of ecstasy, there seems to be the moment of hurt and pain.²⁸

Kinlaw sees the watchmen in this passage as a symbol of the pain experienced by the woman when she is separated from her beloved in Song of Songs 5:2-8. For him, the violent action that they commit against her is to be taken as a symbolic representation of an inner emotional experience.

The symbolic interpretation, like the allegorical one, relies on the author to determine what is and is not symbolic in a given passage. Garret’s suggestion that the watchmen represent the woman’s virginity is based on the biblical portrayal of a city as a virgin, but there is no evidence provided that clearly connects the “watchmen” to the abstract concept of virginity. The suggestion that the watchmen in Song of Songs 3:1-5 and 5:2-8 represent the woman’s emotional state appears to be based on the surrounding textual evidence. This larger context shows the woman performing actions that would be at odds with normal behavior for women of that time in ancient Israel.

²⁷ Duane A. Garrett and Paul R. House, *Song of Songs, Lamentations*, 174.

²⁸ Willem A. VanGemeren, Allen P. Ross, J. Stafford Wright, and Dennis F. Kinlaw, *Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, vol. 5 of *The Expositors Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 1232.

The Typological Method of Interpretation

The typological interpretation of the Song of Songs sits midway between the allegorical and literal understanding of the Song. Richard M. Davidson describes the typological approach as follows:

In the typological approach, the human love relationship between Solomon and the Shulamit is not the worthless “husk” to be stripped away *allegorically* to find the kernel, the “true” meaning, the love between God and His covenant community. Rather the love relationship between man and woman, husband and wife, described in the Song, has independent meaning and value of its own to be affirmed and extolled, while at the same time this human love is given even greater significance as pointing beyond itself to the Divine Lover.²⁹

For Davidson, this approach preserves and respects the literal meaning of the Song, while also leaving room for allusions that point toward the divine love affair between God and his people. In essence, it appears that the typological approach melds the literal and symbolic/allegorical methods together. Davidson highlights the importance of intertextual allusions between Song of Songs and other texts of Scripture in order to determine what is and is not typological. This provides methodological control against rampant typological extrapolation.

Davidson suggests a positive role for the watchmen in Song of Songs 3:1-5, similarly to the allegorical interpretation posited by the ancient Jewish and Christian expositors. He suggests, “intertextually, the watchmen of a city are identified theologically (Isa 62:6–9) as those who carry out a prophetic role of proclaiming good news; they also serve as the protectors of a city guarding it against internal and external threats (Ezek 33:2–7).”³⁰ What is important here is that Davidson views the watchmen as literal watchmen patrolling the city in the Song and not as

²⁹ Richard M. Davidson, “Song of Songs,” in *Seventh-day Adventist International Bible Commentary*, vol. 6: *Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, Richard M. Davidson, Martin G. Klingbeil, Dragoslava Santrac, David R. Tasker, and Jacques B. Doukhan, co-authors (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press; Silver Spring, MD: Review and Herald, 2022), 1109.

³⁰ Davidson, “Song of Songs,” 1222.

symbolic representations of an abstract concept or other group. In his typological application, he draws a connection between the woman's request for assistance from the watchmen and modern-day experiences. As "Shulamit sought help from the night watchmen of the city, so in our times of separation and loneliness and fear of loss we may need to reach out to others who can provide support and assistance (Heb 10:34–35)."³¹ This approach is unique in that the typological interpretation has a literal understanding of the text as its foundation and the various elements in the passage are seen as reflections of a greater truth that points beyond the text.

The Literal Method of Interpretation

The final approach that I will explore is the literal interpretation of the Song of Songs. This approach is not as concerned with typology and symbolism, but rather interprets the text as representing actual events in the world of the Song. Keri Day in her literal interpretation suggests that the watchmen represent a violent reaction by the guardians of the cultural norms against the free sexual and emotional expression of the woman of the Song.

She makes a decision to think out loud, to announce her desires publicly to her lover, demonstrating that erotic fulfilment is not simply the domain of men. Her actions insist on a more complex and spacious view of female desire, which can be contrasted to the woman of Proverbs 31 who is lauded for her sexual chastity and purity within the conventional customs of the day... Her radical subversion of dominant sexual norms is confirmed when the reader witnesses the sentinels (who she peacefully encounters in chapter 3) beating her and leaving her wounded in chapter 5.³²

For Day, the watchmen are a literal force patrolling the city. They accost the woman for her uncouth behavior and appear to represent the abstract concept of "social order."

³¹ Richard M. Davidson, "Song of Songs," in *Seventh-day Adventist International Bible Commentary*, vol. 6: *Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, Richard M. Davidson, Martin G. Klingbeil, Dragoslava Santrac, David R. Tasker, and Jacques B. Doukhan, co-authors (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press; Silver Spring, MD: Review and Herald, 2022), 1225.

³² Keri Day, "I am Dark and Lovely: Let the Shulamite Woman Speak," *Black Theology* 16.3 (2018): 213.

Tremper Longman III also takes the watchmen to “represent the public gaze that treats the woman brutally.”³³ He understands them as literal city patrols, who in the world of the poem serve as an impediment to the woman of the Song and seek to enforce certain societal strictures upon her. Michael Fox in a similar vein suggests that “the Shulammitte was breaching the walls of expected behavior,” and because of this she suffered the ridicule and hostility of the “representatives of the social order,” the watchmen. “The story thus dramatizes vividly—even violently—the tension between the girl’s desires and society’s suspicions.”³⁴

Duane Garrett in his interpretation of Song of Songs 1:6 and 8:8-9 also understands the brothers to be literal brothers who serve as authority figures in the life of their sister and are deeply concerned with her activities. Concerned with her chastity they, “intrude into the lives of the young lovers and prevent them from coming together.”³⁵ Diane Bergant has a similar view on the brothers in 1:6, noting that, “the fact that the brothers assigned the woman to oversee the first vineyard indicates that they exercised some form of authority over it, and also over her and her life. Their anger with her could be connected with her negligence in properly attending to the second vineyard, which is identified as belonging to her.”³⁶

The above literature review is not exhaustive, but it summarizes the most common interpretive approaches to the Song of Songs as a whole and the “watchmen” and “brothers” texts in particular. I am not married to a particular model of interpretation, but I lean closer to the

³³ Tremper Longman, *Song of Songs*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 168-169.

³⁴ Michael V. Fox, *The Song of Songs and the Ancient Egyptian Love Songs*. (Madison: University Of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 142.

³⁵ Garrett and House, *Song of Songs, Lamentations*, 133.

³⁶ Dianne Bergant, *The Song of Songs*. Vol 11 of *Berit Olam: Studies in Hebrew Narrative and Poetry*. Edited by David W. Cotter, Jerome T. Walsh, and Chris Franke. (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2001) 15.

typological model because it respects the literal meaning of the text while leaving room for an understanding that points beyond the text.

Methodology

For my methodology I will be employing a modified version of the approach used by Brian Gault in his investigation of the body metaphors of the Song of Songs, and Danilo Verde in his exploration of the war imagery in the Song of Songs. Gault, summarizing his approach, states:

Based on the conceptual foundation of metaphor in universal and culturally specific variations, as well as the numerous connections between Near Eastern civilizations, this study will rely on comparative literature and iconography to help elucidate meaning. Considering both similarities and differences, parallels will be evaluated on linguistic, geographic, chronological, cultural, and contextual grounds.³⁷

The key, as described by Gault, is to determine the meaning of specific metaphors in the Song of Songs by way of comparison with other literature; whether in the wider MT canon or in other literature from the ANE. Although I am not exploring a metaphorical relationship, I am attempting to determine if there is a relationship between two entities in the Song of Songs, which would benefit from his methodology. Gault's process of discovering specific attributes to investigate and his process for comparison will be the most useful elements that I will adapt for my methodology. However, I will be limiting myself to intertextual analysis of related MT passages and thus will not engage with extrabiblical literature of the ANE.

A brief outline of Gault's methodology is as follows: First, translate specified verse(s) from the Song. Second, identify the source and the target. Third, locate similar imagery

³⁷ Brian P. Gault, *Body as Landscape, Love as Intoxication: Conceptual Metaphors in the Song of Songs*, Ancient Israel and its literature 36 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2019) 44.

elsewhere in the ancient Near East. Fourth, posit potential shared attributes (mapping). Fifth, evaluate options based on language, geography, time, culture, and context. Sixth, clarify possible meaning of the Song's imagery.³⁸

Verde, in his exploration of the war imagery in the Song of Songs, does something similar. However, the main aspect of his methodology, which I intend to borrow, is his focus on the semantic domains of specific terms. He summarizes one of his steps as follows, "the second step concerns the lexicon employed by the Song's metaphors, similes, and scenes at stake, which will be analyzed in light of some of cognitive semantics' achievements."³⁹ A semantic field or domain is explained as "a segment of reality symbolized by a set of related words." Cognitive semantics has further suggested that (1) domains are not only a structure of linguistics but deal primarily with "conceptual representations," and (2) various words can express concepts that are tied together within a given domain because "the realities to which they refer are experienced together." In this view, the meaning of a word is dependent on the domain that it is related to. For instance, the word knife can exist in two domains: eating or fighting. "Whereas in the former case it indicates a kitchen tool, in the latter the same word assumes the connotation of a weapon."⁴⁰ This will be useful in my investigation because if I am able to identify the semantic domains of the "watchmen" and the "brothers" in the Song of Songs I can determine if there is any overlap in their meaning and function.

The following are the steps of my methodology. First, I will translate the passages of the Song of Songs that contain the watchmen and the brothers (Song 3:1-5; 5:2-8 and Song 1:5-6 and

³⁸ Gault, *Body as Landscape*, 45.

³⁹ Danilo Verde, *Conquered Conquerors: Love and War in the Song of Songs*, Ancient Israel and its literature 41 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2020) 44.

⁴⁰ Danilo Verde, *Conquered Conquerors*, 44.

8:8-10) in the MT, LXX and DSS. I will then investigate the structure, themes, important lexemes, context, suggested meanings and attributes of the watchmen and the brothers. I will also include actions taken by the woman as they will provide crucial context.

Second, I will do a lexical study of the word שמר to ascertain the different semantic domains that it can embody. I will give priority to uses of שמר in the participle form where it is used as a substantive that references a person or group of people, but I will also include other uses in the participle form. Then I will do the same with its synonym נטר, which, as outlined in my introduction, is treated as interchangeable with שמר in the LXX. This will serve as a basis for the comparison of the brothers to determine if their actions in the Song of Songs and in parallel passages overlap with the domain of the watchmen.

Third, using the attributes identified in steps 1 and 2, I will locate parallel passages in the wider MT for intertextual comparison. The purpose of this comparison is to find passages that include watchmen and brothers that contain the same attributes, actions, and lexemes in an attempt to better define their actions in the Song of Songs.

Finally, I will synthesize all of the available data to determine whether there is a relationship between the brothers and the watchmen, and if so, to what degree.

This methodology has its limitations. Primarily, since it requires an exploration of a wide array of texts from various contexts and genres within the MT, there is a risk of importing a meaning into the Song of Songs that is inappropriate to its specific context. Secondly, since this thesis is limited to the Old Testament canon, the contributions of extra-biblical sources are largely ignored, and potential insights are left unexplored. A further study would expand the range of texts to include extra-biblical love poetry and investigate it for parallels to the

watchmen and brother scenes in the Song of Songs. These limitations notwithstanding, I believe that this methodology will serve as a solid framework for my investigation.

CHAPTER 2

TRANSLATION OF WATCHMEN AND BROTHERS' TEXTS IN THE SONG OF SONGS

In this chapter I will offer a translation for the watchmen and brothers' passages in the Song of Songs. I will summarize: the setting, main theme(s), grammatical/lexical features, suggested meanings, as well as locate it in the greater context of the Song of Songs. Then I will identify: the characters that appear, their motivations, actions, and other defining characteristics that they possess. Finally, I will create search phrases, based on the characteristics elucidated, which in chapter 3 I will use to find parallel passages in the MT that will assist in facilitating my comparison between the watchmen and the brothers.

Song of Songs 3:1-5

על־משכבי בלילות בקשתי את שאהבה נפשי בקשתיו ולא מצאתי:¹

אקומה נָא ואסובבה בעיר בשוקים וברחבות אבקשה את שאהבה נפשי בקשתיו ולא מצאתי:²

מצאתי השומרים הסבים בעיר את שאהבה נפשי ראיתם:³

כמעט שעברתי מהם עד שמצאתי את שאהבה נפשי אחזתי ולא ארפנו עד־שהביאתי אל־בית אמי ואל־חדר הורתי:⁴

השבעתי אתכם בנות ירושלם בצבאות או באילות השדה אם־תעירו ואם־תעוררו את־האהבה עד שתתקפץ: ס⁵

¹ On my bed during the night I searched for the one whom my soul loves. I looked for him and did not find him.

² I will rise and move about in the city and in the streets and in the open plazas. I will look for the one whom my soul loves. I looked for him and I did not find him.

³ The watchmen who patrol in the city found me. "Have you seen the one whom my soul loves?"

⁴ I passed by them a brief moment until I found the one whom my soul loves. I took hold of him, and I did not let him go until I brought him to the house of my mother, to the darkroom of my conception.

⁵ “I have made you swear daughters of Jerusalem by the gazelles or the deer of the field. Do not awaken and do not excite love until she/it desires.”⁴¹

In the larger macrostructure of the Song of Songs, this passage stands between the proposal of the man in Song 2:8-17 and the wedding processional/song in 3:6-5:1. This passage also appears to share similarities with Song 2:8-17. “In 2:10 and 13, the man sought out the woman and called her to ‘rise up’ and come away with him” to experience the new buds of nature which serves as a metaphor for their blossoming love. “Here in v. 2, she does rise, and it is with the intention of seeking him.”⁴²

The setting is the nighttime city where the woman begins her journey restless and yearning for her lover “on her bed.” The prepositional phrase בַּלַּיְלֹת “literally ‘in the nights,’ can mean ‘at night,’ as in 3:8, but more likely in this context, ‘night after night,’ in a figurative sense.”⁴³ The idea being that her searching occurred over the course of several nights. The phrase עַל־מִשְׁכְּבִי בַּלַּיְלֹת has led some scholars to argue that this passage and 5:2-8 are dream sequences recounted by the woman to the daughters of Jerusalem and not literal events that occur in the world of the Song. Iain Duguid argues that the “scenes have a dreamlike quality, in that they are describing events that are outside the realm of normal experience.” He cautions however that a “poem about a dream is not the same thing as a dream.”⁴⁴

Davidson suggests that “the phrasing used here implies a dream setting. As we have seen in the structural analysis, the parallel member to this section explicitly begins with the statement of the Shulamite: ‘I sleep, but my heart is awake’ (5:2) clearly implying a dream.”⁴⁵ This same

⁴¹ All translations are my own unless noted otherwise.

⁴² Exum, *Song of Songs*, 135.

⁴³ Ariel Bloch and Chana Bloch, *The Song of Songs: A New Translation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 158.

⁴⁴ Iain M. Duguid, *The Song of Songs: An Introduction and Commentary*, TOTC 19 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 101.

⁴⁵ Richard M. Davidson, “Song of Songs,” in *Seventh-day Adventist International Bible Commentary*, vol. 6: *Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, Richard M. Davidson, Martin G. Klingbeil, Dragoslava Santrac,

phrase also appears in Dan 4:1-2 in Aramaic and 7:1 where it indicates a similar dream occurrence.

If Song 3:1-5 is in fact a dream, then it must share common characteristics with dream literature in the wider MT. The first characteristic of dream literature is that they are often identified explicitly as dreams and occur at night when the dreamer is sleeping. Laura Quick identifies the use of the term חלום as an introductory phrase that introduces a dream in a passage. Quick also uses this to draw a distinction between “dreams” and “visions,” which she considers to be a different phenomenon.⁴⁶ Additional introductory dream phrases include: חלום הלילה “in a dream of the night” (Gen 20:3; 28:12; 40:5; 41:1); חלום חלומתי “I dreamed a dream” (Judg 7:13) usually when recounting a dream to someone, לילך “spend the night” (Gen 28:11) usually indicating the time of day when the dream occurs and the Aramaic חלום חזית... על משכבי “dreaming upon my bed” (Dan 4:1-2; 7:1).

Another important characteristic of dream literature is the termination point of the dream. This is often indicated by the waking of the dreamer, with the use of words that indicate “rising,” “getting up early,” or “waking” (Gen 20:8; 28:16; 41:4). Finally, after waking, the dreamer will often recount their dream to others using a narrative form (Gen 40:1-16; Judg 7:12-15; Dan 4:7). Laura Quick further categorizes dreams into two types: “the symbolic dream, which might be auditory, but which usually featured visual imagery pointing to a hidden meaning that required interpretation to be properly understood; and the message dream, in which the deity delivered a particular spoken message to the dreamer.”⁴⁷

David R. Tasker, and Jacques B. Doukhan, co-authors (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press; Silver Spring, MD: Review and Herald, 2022), 1220.

⁴⁶ Laura Quick, “Dream Accounts in the Hebrew Bible and Ancient Jewish Literature,” *CBR* 17 (2018): 11-12.

⁴⁷ Quick, “Dream Accounts,” 17.

John Miller also sees two main categories for dream literature in the Old Testament, message dream-visions and symbolic dream-visions. He does not draw a distinction between “dreams” and visions,” opting instead to refer to them as “dream-visions,” counting the two as one phenomena. In his investigation he suggests that these dream-visions served a specific function in ancient literature. Dream-visions in general “serve the purpose of directing or redirecting the plot of a narrative.”⁴⁸ Message dream-visions often involve contact with a deity who provides a directive that the recipient must follow. Symbolic dream-visions, on the other hand, “have to be interpreted by the characters in a story.”⁴⁹

An excellent example of a message dream is when God confronted Abimelech over taking Sarah as a wife (Gen 20:3-6). Abimelech received direct communication from the deity who gave him a directive, which he followed. This message dream also served the purpose of pushing the narrative forward. An excellent example of a symbolic dream is Pharaoh’s dream about the seven-year famine (Gen 41:1-8). Each of these dreams had vivid symbolism (ears of corn and cows devouring each other, etc.) and the interpretation of these dreams by Joseph redirected the entire plot elevating him from slavery to political leadership and eventual reunification with his family.

Now that the characteristics of dream literature have been identified, should Song 3:1-5 be considered dream literature? It is highly unlikely that this section of Song of Songs is a message dream. There is no direct communication with a deity and there is no clear instruction given to a dreamer. Classifying Song 3:1-5 as a symbolic dream is potentially a better fit but also provides issues with that identification. The major issue is that there is not an individual

⁴⁸ John B. F. Miller, “Exploring the Function of Symbolic Dream Visions,” *PRSt* 37 (2010): 446.

⁴⁹ Miller, “Exploring the Function of Symbolic Dream Visions,” 446.

identified in the poem as the interpreter of the symbols of the supposed dream. This is out of step with symbolic dream-visions in the wider MT canon.

There are also key terms that are not present in the text that are indicative of symbolic dream literature. The term חלום “dream,” which would be an explicit indicator that the woman of the Song is dreaming, is not present. Freehof would disagree, arguing that the frequency with which the book speaks of “lying in bed at night or the bed of Solomon” and references to events that will “last until the day dawn and the shadows flee;”⁵⁰ are all indications that the Song of Songs as a whole and the discussed passages in particular are dream literature. To be fair, the act of lying in bed and the nighttime setting are conducive for dreaming. Song 5:2’s identification of the woman as “sleeping but my heart was awake” can also potentially indicate a dream-like state.

There also is not a clear indication of when the woman awakens from her dream. The terms יקץ “to wake up” and שכח “to rise early,” which are indicators that a person has transitioned from a sleeping to a waking state (see Gen 20:8; 28:16; 41:4) do not occur in this passage nor in Song 5:2-8. The word אֶקְוֶמָה “I will rise” (Song 3:2) could serve a similar purpose to יקץ and שכח indicating that the woman of the Song has now transitioned from sleeping to waking. This still presents a problem as it would necessitate that the events that happen afterward occur while she is awake. Alternatively, it could be argued that her adjuration to the daughters of Jerusalem in Song 3:5 was her recounting her dream to them and her rising out of bed during the narrative and all of the events thereafter occurred while she was still asleep. This is a question that warrants further investigation. As of now, it is inconclusive as to whether Song 3:1-5 and by extension 5:2-8 are dreams, but I will keep it in mind as a possible option that can lend credence to a symbolic interpretation.

⁵⁰ Freehof, “The Song of Songs: A General Suggestion,” 401.

The main theme of Song 3:1-5 is separation and union. The terms *בָּקַשׁ* “to search” “is very common in the Old Testament and is used both literally and figuratively. It is always a conscious act, frequently requiring a great deal of effort but with no guarantee of success.” This is borne out in the text when it is joined with *וְלֹא מָצָאתִיו* (I did not find him) which can mean “to find after a diligent search (e.g. Gen. 2:20; 1 Sam. 20:21, 36), or to stumble upon accidentally (2 Kgs. 22:8).”⁵¹ Concerning the woman this was not a “casual desire” but a “deep-seated craving.”⁵² According to Dianne Bergant the entire search by the woman is abnormal. “In patriarchal societies the city was the domain of men, not of women.”⁵³ With great personal risk the woman ventures out into the city to find her beloved.

The two terms “to seek” and “to find” are prevalent throughout the passage and create a pattern of seeking and not finding. In the first two verses the phrase *בָּקַשְׁתִּיו וְלֹא מָצָאתִיו* “I sought him and did not find him” describes her inability to find her beloved in two locations: first on her bed and then in the city. “The repetition of this phrase suggests a sigh. LXX adds: ‘I called him, but he did not answer me.’”⁵⁴ The pattern shifts at the introduction of the *הַשְּׂמָרִים* “watchmen.” “Two forms of the same root, *sbb*, are used, a simple *qal* for the watchmen/s routine activity of making their rounds and a *poel*, indicating intensity, for the woman’s search.”⁵⁵

After the watchmen are encountered, the term *בָּקַשׁ* is abandoned and *מָצָא* is used without a negation. This is demonstrated initially when the woman is found by the “watchmen” and later when she has found her beloved. This is where the passage transitions from “seeking the lost” to “holding the found,” demonstrated by the term *בָּקַשְׁתִּיו וְלֹא מָצָאתִיו* “I looked for him and did not

⁵¹ Carr, *The Song of Solomon*, 105.

⁵² Duguid, *The Song of Songs: An Introduction and Commentary*, 101.

⁵³ Bergant, *The Song of Songs*, 35.

⁵⁴ Fox, *Song of Songs and the Ancient Egyptian Love Songs*, 118.

⁵⁵ Exum, *Song of Songs*, 136.

find him,” being replaced by אָחַזְתִּיו וְלֹא אֶרְפָּנוּ “I seized him, and I did not let him go.” The הַשְׁמָרִים appear to be at the center of this transition point, and only after her question to them, אֶת שְׂאֵהֶבָה “have you seen the one whom my soul loves” “when all hope seemed lost, after three failed attempts, she almost literally ran into him.”⁵⁶ The poem then concludes with her bringing her lover to the house of her mother and her adjuration to the daughters of Jerusalem.

The above brief investigation of Song of Songs 3:1-5 has revealed important insights, key words, and phrases, that will be useful in identifying parallel passages for my investigation. First, many scholars agree that Song of Songs 3:1-5 has a dream-like quality, even if they do not agree to classifying it as such, with figurative language being employed throughout. Given the figurative nature of this passage, it is possible that the elements within are representations of something else other than the character that is presented in the text.

Second, the watchmen themselves are identified as הַשְׁמָרִים, which will be the main Hebrew term that I will investigate in my lexical study. I will also investigate some of its synonyms to see if they can contribute to the lexical and semantic understanding of הַשְׁמָרִים. I will also explore how often οἱ τηροῦντες “the watchmen” is used as a translation for הַשְׁמָרִים, as this is the word offered as a translation by the LXX in this passage, to see if additional lexical and semantic nuances can be gleaned.

Third, the הַשְׁמָרִים take various actions that will be useful in identifying parallel passages in the wider MT canon to compare to Song 3:1-5. This will also form a standard by which the brothers of the Song can be compared to. The actions that they take in the text are as follows:

⁵⁶ Duguid, *The Song of Songs: An Introduction and Commentary*, 102.

they are described as: הסבכים בעיר “patrolling in the city,” מצאוי “finding the woman,” are asked if they “have seen” ראייתם someone and are unresponsive.

Song of Songs 5:2-8

אני ישנה ולבי ער קולו דודי דופק פתחי-לי אחתי רעיתי יונתי תמתי שראשי נמלא-טל קנצותי רסיסי לילה: ²
פלטתי את-בתנתי איכה אלבשנה רתצתי את-רגלי איכה אטנפם: ³
דודי שלח ידו מן-החור ומצי המו עלי: ⁴
קמתי אני לפתח לדודי ודני נטפורמור ואצבעתי מור עבר על פפות המנעול: ⁵
פתחתי אני לדודי ודודי חמק עבר נפשי יצאה בדברו בקשתיהו ולא מצאתיהו קראתיו ולא ענני: ⁶
מצאני השמרים הסבכים בעיר הכני פצעוני נשאו את-דידל מעלי שמרי החמות: ⁷
השבעתי אתכם בנות ירושלים אם-תמצאו את-דודי מה-תגידו לו שחולת אהבה אני: ⁸

² I am asleep, but my heart is awake. The voice of my beloved is knocking, “open to me, my sister, my bride, my companion, my perfect one. For my head is filled with dew, my locks with the dew of the night.”

³ I have taken off my tunic. How can I clothe myself again? I have washed my feet. How can I dirty them again?

⁴ My beloved sent his hand through the hole and my inner being was restless because of him.

⁵ I rose to open for my beloved and my hands dripped myrrh and my fingers myrrh running over on the handle of the bolt.

⁶ I opened for my beloved and my beloved had turned away and left. My soul went out because of his turning. I looked for him and I did not find him. I called him and he did not answer me.

⁷ The watchmen who patrol in the city found me. They struck me, they wounded me, and they removed my veil from me, those watchers of the walls.

⁸ I have made you swear, daughters of Jerusalem, “If you find my beloved, what will you tell him? That I am lovesick.”

This text is a parallel passage to Song 3:1-5 and shares similar characters and themes. In the greater context of the Song of Songs, this text occurs after the wedding song and the union of the man and the woman in 5:1. This passage appears to illustrate a breakdown in their

relationship, where mutual pursuit is replaced by rejection. This passage also takes place at night with the phrase *אָנִי יִשְׁנָה וְלִבִּי עֹר*, “I am asleep, but my heart is awake” indicating that the woman was sleeping. This again begs the question of whether this passage is a dream event (See the previous section, Song 3:1-5 as Dream Literature).

Longman argues that this question is immaterial as it “is most pressing if we are dealing with a real historical situation, but the action that follows this introduction is almost surreal and, later when the woman is abused by the city guards (5:7), somewhat sadistic.”⁵⁷ This leads Longman to suggest that the characters of the Song of Songs function within a poetic world with its associated symbols and themes. I think that understanding this passage as taking place within a poetic world helps to alleviate the need to classify it as a dream, without denying the possibility. Since “in poems, as in dreams, the normal and expected course of events does not always transpire”⁵⁸ This also does not require a literal interpretation of the events that transpire, leaving the door open for a symbolic or metaphorical interpretation.

The main theme in this passage is, separation, which is similar to Song 3:1-5, where the woman searches for the man in the city. There is a twist however, in this scene the man is the one who initially approaches the woman before she searches for him in the city. This search is instigated by “her own slowness to respond.”⁵⁹ This passage begins with the man outside of the house of the woman asking her to, *פְּתִיחֵי-לִי* “open to me,” after which he is met with her refusal. Eventually she relents and *פְּתָחָתִי* “opens” for him only to find that he has departed. After this, the passage transitions from the house of the woman to the city where she encounters the *הַשֹּׁמְרִים* *הַבְּעִיר* “the watchmen who patrol in the city” only this time they are hostile and leave her

⁵⁷ Longman, *Song of Songs*, 165.

⁵⁸ Duguid, *The Song of Songs: An Introduction and Commentary*, 124.

⁵⁹ Duguid, *The Song of Songs: An Introduction and Commentary*, 128.

physically wounded. Additionally, they are given a further designation, שְׁמֵרֵי הַחֲמוֹת “watchers of the walls,” possibly specifying the type of watchmen that are in view in the passage, i.e., “guardians of the borders of the city.” The passage concludes with the woman separated from her lover and urging the daughters of Jerusalem to tell her beloved that she is “lovesick.”

Many of the lexemes in this text are similar to the ones found in Song 3:1-5 and will not be repeated here. The additional designation given to the watchmen in Song 5:7 שְׁמֵרֵי הַחֲמוֹת “watchers/watchmen of the walls” provides further information about their occupation and will be useful in finding parallel passages. I will look for passages that have הַשְׁמֵרִים interacting with הַחֲמוֹת in the wider MT and I will apply this same approach to its synonyms and determine how often the Greek word φυλασσω “to keep, watch, guard,” is used for שמר, as that is the translation offered by the LXX in this section. Moreover, I will investigate the actions taken by them against the woman, הִכּוּנִי כְּצַעֲוֵנִי וְשָׂאוּ, “to strike, wound, and lift up” respectively. I will specifically look for passages where הַשְׁמֵרִים is the subject of these verbs, הִכּוּנִי כְּצַעֲוֵנִי וְשָׂאוּ, to see if they offer a clearer understanding of their behavior. Finally, I will look for passages where the woman of the Song is the direct object of these verbs to determine if these actions represent a pattern of in the wider MT. I will also investigate if such treatment is perpetuated, and if there are parallel actions carried out by the brothers in the Song. Before moving forward with this stage of my investigation, I will first investigate the passages in the Song of Songs that reference the brothers of the woman.

The Brothers in the Song of Songs

The “brothers” in the Song of Songs appear to have a complicated relationship with the woman, appearing to impede her progress in her quest for love as well as limiting her bodily

autonomy. They also are painted as an antagonistic and controlling force that possibly seeks financial gain from her productivity. These surface level observations will be further explored below in my translations of Song 1:5-6 and 8:8-10.

Song of Songs 1:5-6

שְׁחֹרָה אֲנִי וְנֹאזָה בָנוֹת יְרוּשָׁלַם כְּאֵהָלֵי קֶדָר כִּירִיעוֹת שְׁלֹמֹה:⁵

אֶל־תִּרְאוּנִי שְׁאֲנִי שְׁחֹרְחֹרְתִי שֶׁשָּׁזַפְתָּנִי הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ בְּגִי אִמִּי נִחְרַרְבֵי שְׁמִנִי נִטְרָה אֶת־הַכְּרָמִים כְּרָמֵי שְׁלֵי לֹא נִטְרָתִי:⁶

⁵ “I am dark and lovely,” daughters of Jerusalem, “like the tents of Kedar, like the curtain of Solomon.”

⁶ “Do not look at me because I am dark, because the sun has turned me brown. My mother’s sons were angry with me and made me a keeper of the vineyards. My vineyard that belongs to me I have not kept.”

These two verses are the first in the Song of Songs that describe the apparent conflict between the woman and an outside entity. The principle antagonists in these verses are identified as אִמִּי בְּגִי “mother’s sons.” It is unclear if they share the same father or if he was present in the family. There are two main actions that are attributed to them: they נִחְרַרְבֵי “are angry with” their sister and שְׁמִנִי “place her” in the vineyards, implying that she did not have agency in her placement. The LXX offers ἐμαχέσσαντο ἐν ἐμοί, “They fought with me” instead of “anger,” suggesting a possible alternative understanding or source text. However, whether the brothers were angry, or physically violent, the idea of hostility towards the sister is still present.

G. Llyod Carr adds some insight into the function of the brothers in this section of the Song. He says, “the role of her brothers (mother’s sons), and omission of any reference to father anywhere in the song, suggest that the father was dead, and that the brothers were fulfilling the role of leadership in the family.”⁶⁰ By his suggestion, the brothers seem to take on the responsibility for governing their sister because of the absence of their father. Cheryl Exum adds,

⁶⁰ Carr, *The Song of Solomon*, 79.

“The authority the brothers have over the woman in this verse suggests that she has not yet reached or is just reaching marriageable age. The Song’s lovers, then, are pictured here as young.”⁶¹ Their assignment for her as a keeper “is ambiguous: while possibly involving productive notions of ‘tending,’ ‘managing,’ or ‘overseeing,’ it also connotes more protective duties of ‘guarding,’ ‘watching,’ or ‘preserving’ *others turf*, with no appreciable benefit to the ‘keeper.’”⁶² That the woman in the song receives no benefit from her assigned task of maintaining her brothers’ vineyards is evident by her neglect of her own vineyard.

The woman is described as שְׁחֹרָה “dark” because of her exposure to the sun. Perhaps “there is a play on words here, as the root meaning of the verb חרה (to be angry) is ‘become hot, burn.’ The similarity between the heat of the sun and the heat of the brothers is evident.”⁶³ It is possible that the poet chose this interplay to highlight how her brother’s attitude toward her is destructive and disruptive, like the sun which burned her. Duane A. Garrett takes this a step further, suggesting that,

the brothers represent a general sense of oppression that the young woman feels in her paternal home. As a sister, destined to marry and leave the household, she receives the harsh treatment that is otherwise reserved for slaves. Regarded as a quasi-outsider who consumes the goods of the household, she is forced by her brothers into menial tasks for the common good of the family and is not free to pursue her own interests.⁶⁴

Garret positions the brothers as a wholly negative force that make her a נֹטְרָה אֶת־הַכְּרָמִים “keeper of the vineyards” to gain some kind of financial benefit from her while she is still unmarried. “Evidently, the brothers assume their father’s patriarchal mantle and property.”⁶⁵ This appears to include the productive potential of their little sister and their vineyards. Whether

⁶¹ Exum, *Song of Songs*, 105.

⁶² F. Scott Spencer, “Feeling the Burn Angry Brothers Adamant Sister,” *CBQ* 81 (2019): 421.

⁶³ Carr, *The Song of Solomon*, 79.

⁶⁴ Garrett and House, *Song of Songs, Lamentations*, 134.

⁶⁵ Spencer, “Feeling the Burn Angry Brothers Adamant Sister,” 421.

for material benefit or her protection, it is clear that the brothers in the Song 1:5-6 take an adversarial and governing role in the life of their sister.

Song 8:8-10

אַתּוֹת לְנוֹ קַטְנָה וְשׂוֹדִים אֵין לָהּ מִהַנְּעֻשָׁה לְאַחֲתָנוּ בַיּוֹם שֶׁיִּדְבַר-בָּהּ: ⁸

אִם-חוֹמָה הִיא נִבְנָה עָלֶיהָ טִירַת כֶּסֶף וְאִם-דֶּלֶת הִיא נֶצְוֵר עָלֶיהָ לַיּוֹם אָרֶז: ⁹

אֲנִי חוֹמָה וְשׂוֹדִי כַּמְגִדְלוֹת אֲזוּ הִיְתִי בְעֵינָיו כְּמוֹצֵאת שְׁלוֹם: ¹⁰ פ

⁸ “We have a little sister who has no breasts. What will we do for our sister in the day when she is spoken for?”

⁹ “If she is a wall, we will build on her ramparts of silver. If she is a door, we will surround her with boards of cedar.”

¹⁰ “I am a wall, and my breasts are like towers, then I will be in his eyes like one who brings peace.”

The first speakers in this text are identified by the words *אַתּוֹת לְנוֹ קַטְנָה*, “we have a little sister.” It is unclear if this refers to the brothers of the woman in the Song or a different group of individuals. The first common plural pronoun ending could refer to men, women, or a mixed gendered group. However, given that both Song 1:6 and 8:8 are parallel passages in the larger macro-structure of the Song of Songs, as outlined by Davidson,⁶⁶ and since both passages contain similar characters, words, and themes, I believe that the *אַתּוֹת לְנוֹ קַטְנָה* should be considered as the brothers of the woman in the Song.

This group is described as being concerned for their sister, wondering, *מִהַנְּעֻשָׁה לְאַחֲתָנוּ*, “what to do for her when she is spoken for.” Marvin Pope in his commentary describes the possible meanings for the term “spoken for” in Song of Songs 8:8. He says,

The expression *lědabbēr bē-* has different meanings according to context. It may denote disapproval and hostility, “to speak against,” as in Num 12:1, 21:5, 7 Ps 50:20. Tur-Sinai (II, 368) interpreted the clause *seyedubbar-bah* here as meaning “when incantations are pronounced upon her” (cf. Gordis, 32n 120). The brothers would thus take measure to

⁶⁶ Richard M. Davidson, “The Literary Structure of the Song of Songs *Redivivus*,” 50.

protect little sister. One may think also of malicious gossip and recall the “hillbilly” ditty in which the brother’s concern for sister’s reputation dictates drastic action, “Smack her down agin, Pa... we don’t want the neighbors talkin’ ‘bout our kin...” the expression is also used in the Bible for proposal of marriage (1 Sam 25:39): And David sent and spoke for (*waydadder be-*) Abigail to take her to himself as wife.” Brothers played a major role in the sister’s courtship and marriage (Gen 24:29,50,55,60), and in the protection of her chastity (Gen 34:6-17; II Sam 13:20,32).⁶⁷

If this interpretation is correct, it would position the brothers as protectors of their sister and deeply interested in preserving her “virtue” for her future husband. F. Scott Spencer contends that a reading of the phrase “our little sister” as a “term of endearment expressed by protective big brothers” is an error and that the “context conjures more a *belittling* of her stock on the marriage block.”⁶⁸ It is time for her to earn her keep and be married so that “someone will come and acquire her by paying a dowry.”⁶⁹ The “brothers worry about how literally little their sister weighs in, particularly her breasts, which any worthy suitor might be sizing up or down.” They decide to *בְּנִיחַ עָלֶיהָ טִירַת כֶּסֶף* “build on her ramparts of silver” if she is a wall and to *נְצוֹר וְאַרְזוּ עָלֶיהָ לֹחַ אֶרְזוּ* “surround her with boards of cedar” if she is a door, as an effort to build up their deficient sister to “fatten her up for auction, strategizing like generals for war on her body.”⁷⁰

In the brothers’ first suggestion, they say, “if she is a wall we will build on her bulwarks of silver.” The wall that is in view here is not “the wall of a house, but the wall of the city. It carries within itself the connotation of defence and enclosure.”⁷¹ The addition of a bulwark/battlement to the wall suggests a military application and gives the idea of her being closed off from something. The Hebrew word for bulwark/battlement, *טֵרֶה* and its Greek translation *ἐπάλξεις* are most often used to describe a row of stones that surround an encampment, or an additional fortification that is built upon a wall. Silver, the material that the

⁶⁷ Marvin H. Pope, *Song of Songs: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 678.

⁶⁸ Spencer, “Feeling the Burn Angry Brothers Adamant Sister,” 426.

⁶⁹ Duguid, *The Song of Songs: An Introduction and Commentary*, 156.

⁷⁰ Spencer, “Feeling the Burn Angry Brothers Adamant Sister,” 426

⁷¹ Barbiero, *Song of Songs: A Close Reading*, 475.

brothers choose to fortify their sister, is not an ideal building material for fortifications. This can possibly indicate that their building has a purpose that mixes fortification and decoration. This would ensure that she would be attractive to potential suitors that are brother-approved, while maintaining her chastity.⁷² Elaine T. James suggests that the building of טרה should instead be understood as an action “taken against the city by an enemy in siege warfare, specifically the building of encampments outside or beside the city wall.”⁷³ The woman who is the city in this case is beset by suitors eagerly waiting for her to open her doors to them.

In their second condition they state, “if she is a door, we will barricade her with boards of cedar.” The term דלת “door” indicates the “door of a gate and expresses the same idea of enclosure.” The word for barricade צור is often translated: “to encircle (lay siege), to bind, to fight against, and in some cases, to form.” It is used mostly in a military context and conflict between two opposing parties. Its usage here could indicate that the “door is being secured against battering rams.”⁷⁴ Through the imagery of a boarded-up door, this would suggest that the brothers are forcefully keeping her contained against her will and protected from outside influence. The LXX offers a different interpretation for this event. The word διαγραφο is used as the translation and often means: to carve, to write, or to inscribe.⁷⁵ This would suggest the image of a beautifully carved cedar door as opposed to a fortified one. The use of cedar as the building material, a “wood that is not only solid but also particularly precious, used for the temple and for the king’s palace,” can also indicate the dual theme of fortification and beautification.⁷⁶

Alternatively, Fox understands this section to indicate that the brothers of the woman now accept

⁷² Duguid, *The Song of Songs: An Introduction and Commentary*, 156.

⁷³ Elaine T. James, “A City who Surrenders,” *VT* 67 (2017): 452.

⁷⁴ Michael D. Goulder, *The Song of Fourteen Songs*, JSOTSup 36 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1986), 66.

⁷⁵ Johan Lust, Erik Eynikel, and Katrin Hauspie, *Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2003), 136.

⁷⁶ Barbiero, *Song of Songs: A Close Reading*, 477.

her marriage and instead take the attitude “whatever she may be, we will take care of her.”⁷⁷ This suggests that the building actions are meant to support her and not confine her.

The woman in response uses the metaphor of her brothers with a twist, taking their fortification imagery a step further by stating that her “breasts are as large as towers.” This paints the picture of a heavily defended city, as towers are often added to ancient cities to aid in their defence, which contrasts with her former state of sexual immaturity. Additionally, calling herself “one who brings peace” suggests a city that has surrendered and avoided a siege, allowing her lover to “take possession of the city.”⁷⁸

Now that I have analyzed the brothers’ passages, I will outline the terms that I will use to identify parallel texts in the wider MT canon. First, I will investigate בְּנֵי אִמִּי “mother’s sons” who refer to their אָחוֹת לְנִי קְטַנָּה “little sister” that perform the following actions: נִקְרַחְבִּי “to be angry,” שָׂמַנִּי “to set/put,” מַה־נַּעֲשֶׂה לְאַחֲתֵנוּ בַיּוֹם שֶׁיִּדְבַר־רַבָּה “what will we do for her in the day she is spoken for,” נִבְנֶה עָלֶיהָ עֲלִיָּה טִירַת כְּסָף “build on her ramparts of silver,” and נַצְוֹר עָלֶיהָ לִיִּת אֶרֶז “we will encase her with boards of cedar.” The hope is that these terms will yield parallel passages that will illuminate the role that the brothers play in the life of their sister in the Song of Songs. Additionally, the goal is to determine if there is an overlap of theme and function between them and the “watchmen.

⁷⁷ Fox, *Song of Songs and the Ancient Egyptian Love Songs*, 173.

⁷⁸ Exum, *Song of Songs*, 258.

CHAPTER 3

LEXICAL AND SEMANTIC STUDY OF שמר ITS SYNONYMS AND GREEK TRANSLATIONS

In this chapter I will do a lexical and semantic study of the verb שמר to identify its range of meaning and semantic domains. I will give special attention to the important words and phrases that I outlined in my previous chapter. Then I will identify and analyze נטר/נצר, which is a synonym of שמר and has shared Greek translations. Finally, I will investigate the LXX words φυλασσω and τηρω to see where they are used as translations for שמר/שמרים and its synonyms and what can be gleaned from that relationship.

שמר

One of the meanings of שמר is an individual or being who secures or protects a specified area.⁷⁹ Some passages include Genesis 3:24, in which a flaming sword is placed to guard the tree of life. 1 Samuel 17:20-22; 28:2, where someone is responsible for guarding flocks and tools or an important person. Jeremiah 4:17, where watchmen are guarding a field by surrounding it. Isaiah 62:6, which describes the “watchmen who guard the walls,” and Nehemiah 11:19, where שמר are those who guard the gate of a city. In a similar way, Judges 7:19 and Isaiah 21:11-12 describe someone who is charged with watching for enemies who wish to attack a camp at night. The act of watching is considered as a part of the act of guarding. In its most basic sense, a שמר/שמרים is someone who watches (out for) someone, or something for the purpose of

⁷⁹ HALOT 2:1582.

protecting (against) it. This can include both military and agrarian contexts. A related usage of שמר includes having an obligation to a duty (Numbers 3:38), holding to a particular code/god for good or ill (Exodus 20:6; Jonah 2:9), holding one's own tongue, maintaining discipline (Proverbs 21:23), which describes holding/keeping in a metaphorical sense, and simply looking at someone or something Ecclesiastes (11:4). This would make one of the semantic domains of שמרים/שמר a guardian in a military, agrarian, and metaphorical context.

Judges 1:23-25 provides an example of שמרים/שמר that presents a different understanding compared to the examples provided above.

וַתִּירֹוּ בֵּית־יֹוסֵף בְּבֵית־אֵל וְשֵׁם־הָעִיר לְפָנֵיהֶם לֹוז:²³
וַיֵּרְאוּ הַשְּׁמָרִים אִישׁ יוֹצֵא מִן־הָעִיר וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ הֲרָאָנוּ נָא אֶת־מִקְבֹּוא הָעִיר וְעָשִׂינוּ עִמָּךְ הַסֵּד:²⁴
וַיֵּרָאֵם אֶת־מִקְבֹּוא הָעִיר וַיַּכּוּ אֶת־הָעִיר לְפִי־חָרֶב וְאֶת־הָאִישׁ וְאֶת־כָּל־מִשְׁפַּחְתּוֹ שָׁלַח:²⁵

²³ Then the house of Joseph spied out Beth-el and the name of the city before them was Luz.

²⁴ Then the watchmen saw a man going out of the city. They said to him, “show us the entrance of the city and we will do well with you,”

²⁵ and he showed them the entrance to the city. Then they struck the city with the mouth of the sword, and they drove away every man and all his clan.⁸⁰

In the above text, the שמרים/שמר function like an antagonistic force instead of a protective group. The verb וַתִּירֹוּ “they spied out” indicates that the house of Joseph was engaged in reconnaissance of Beth-el and the city of Luz. “As is frequent in biblical war portrayals and in actual warring situations, reconnaissance troops are sent to assess the situation before battle (e.g. Num 13; Josh 2).”⁸¹ Verse 24 provides more detail into the actual reconnaissance explaining that וַיֵּרְאוּ הַשְּׁמָרִים אִישׁ יוֹצֵא מִן־הָעִיר “the watchmen saw a man going out of the city.” This is further

⁸⁰ All translations in this chapter are personal translations unless otherwise noted.

⁸¹ Susan Niditch, *Judges*, The Oxford Bible Commentary (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 179.

supported by the fact that the verbs **וַיִּתְיֹרוּ** and **וַיִּרְאוּ** are parallel where **וַיִּרְאוּ** describes the process of spying out the land. Its connection to the **שֹׁמְרִים/שֹׁמֵר** identifies them as the spies. Verse 25 describes the actions that they took against the city, **וַיִּכּוּ אֶת-הָעִיר לְפִי-חֶרֶב וְאֶת-הָאִישׁ וְאֶת-כָּל-**, **מִשְׁפָּחָתוֹ שֶׁלְּחֹו** “then they struck the city with the mouth of the sword, and they drove away every man and all his clan.” The verbs **וַיִּכּוּ** and **שֶׁלְּחֹו** are third common plural verbs and require a plural subject; the closest antecedent that fits this description is **הַשֹּׁמְרִים**, which would suggest that they, the watchmen, are the ones who committed these actions against the city of Luz, either by themselves or as the larger collective of the “house of Joseph.” This indicates that **שֹׁמְרִים/שֹׁמֵר** have an expanded role that includes watching in preparation for an attack as well as watching for the purpose of protection. This would add an additional domain where a **שֹׁמְרִים/שֹׁמֵר** is a spy or a vanguard of a military force.

The next phase of my lexical and semantic investigation will concern **נֹטֵר**, which occurs ten times in the Masoretic text. **נֹטֵר** is an Aramaic by-form⁸² of **נָצַר**, which will also be included here. Additionally, the uses of **נֹטֵר** in the Aramaic sections of the DSS will also be considered. I will primarily investigate its usage as a substantival participle, including adjectival usages where applicable.

נֹטֵר

The word **נֹטֵר** appears in Song of Songs 1:6 and 8:11-12, occurring a total of five times. Song of Songs 1:5-6 is situated between a romantic liaison between the woman and the king in verse 1-4 and her search for her lover among the shepherds in verses 7-8. Verses 5-6 function as a separation point in the chapter and describe the woman’s physical separation from her beloved.

⁸² *HALOT* 1:695.

In verse 5 she informs the daughters of Jerusalem that because of/in spite of her dark appearance, she is beautiful. In verse 6 she gives the reason for her complexion: בְּגִי אִמִּי נִחַרְוֵי לִי: “the sons of her mother were angry with her.” The LXX translation reads “fought with”, implying violent struggle.

The brothers also set her as a נֹטֵרָה אֶת־הַכְּרָמִים “keeper of the vineyards,” to the neglect of her own vineyard. This leads to her separation from her beloved and her eventual search for him in verses 7-8. Songs 8:11-12 occur after her dramatic self-description in verse 10 where she contradicts her brother’s estimation and offered protection of her. These verses also offer a contrast to 1:5-6; where the woman is no longer responsible for the vineyard of another person but for her own, and it leads to the dramatic reunion of the two lovers of the Song. Proverbs 27:18 describes a נֹצֵר as an individual who tends an agricultural product, in this case a fig tree. According to the above-mentioned passages, the first domain of נֹצֵר/נֹטֵר is a person who tends or guards crops.

Isaiah 1:7-9 offers an interesting example of the word נֹצֵר and its relationship to a city in the Hebrew Bible.

אַרְצְכֶם שְׂמָמָה עָרֵיכֶם שָׂרְפוֹת אֵשׁ אֲדַמְתֶּכֶם לְנִגְדְכֶם זָרִים אֲכָלִים אֹתָהּ וְשָׂמָה כְּמַהֲפַכַת זָרִים:⁷

וְנֹתְרָה בַת־צִיּוֹן כְּסֻכָּה בְּכָרֶם כְּמִלְוִיָּה בְּמִקְשָׁה כְּעִיר נֹצֵרָה:⁸

לוֹלִי יִהְיֶה צְבָאוֹת הַחַיִּים לְגֹן שָׂרִיד כְּמַעֲט כְּסֹדֶם הָלֵינוּ לְעַמְרָה דְּמִינָה:⁹

⁷ Your land is desolation; your cities are burned with fire. Your ground, strangers are devouring it in front of you. And it is desolation like the conquering of strangers.

⁸ The daughter of Zion remains like a hut in the vineyard, like a night shelter in a field of cucumbers, like a besieged/watched city.

⁹ Had the LORD of armies not left us a few survivors, we would have been like Sodom and resembled Gomorrah.

In this passage, three metaphors are used to describe the situation that the daughter of Zion finds herself in. First, it says that the *וְנֹתְרָה בַת־צִיּוֹן* “the daughter of Zion remains.” *וְנֹתְרָה* can also mean to “survive, be left over. She is then compared to a *סֹכֶה בְּכַרְם* “hut in a vineyard. A *סֹכֶה* is a temporary shelter that is used by a *נֹצֵר* who is protecting/tending a vineyard (also Job 27:18 where the temporary nature is emphasized).⁸³ The prepositional phrase *בְּכַרְם* indicates that the hut is located in the middle of the vineyard. The second metaphor is like the first: *כְּמִלֹּגָה בְּמִקְנֵשָׁה* “like a night shelter in a field of cucumbers,” “the idea is very much that of a temporary and insecure place of refuge.”⁸⁴ The final metaphor changes the description from agriculture to military: *כְּעִיר נְצוּרָה* “like a watched/besieged city.

The verb *נְצוּרָה* can be understood in two ways; as a Qal, passive participle, feminine singular form of *נָצַר*, meaning “to watch or protect”⁸⁵ or a Niphal, participle., feminine singular form of *נָצַר*, “meaning to lay siege or encircle.”⁸⁶ It is not clear textually as to which is the correct form. This final metaphor clarifies the preceding ones, indicating that the placement of the daughter of Zion in the midst of vegetables is not to guard them, as is the function of the *נֹצֵר*, but to be surrounded and isolated like a city that is watched/encircled during a siege. Whichever word is chosen the result is the same, the freedom of movement of the daughter of Zion is restricted, and she is unable to prevent strangers from devouring her land.

The verb *נָצַר* in this context, if we assume it to be the correct form, is used to describe an antagonistic force that is surrounding a city. This is similar to the separation experienced by the woman in Song of Songs 1:6b where, *כִּי אֲמִי נִחְרַרְכִּי שְׁמֹנֵי נִטְרָה אֶת־הַכְּרָמִים פְּרִמִּי יְשֻׁלִּי לֹא נִטְרָתִי:* “the

⁸³ HALOT 1:753.

⁸⁴ R. Coggins, *Isaiah*, The Oxford Bible Commentary (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 438.

⁸⁵ HALOT 1:718

⁸⁶ HALOT 1:1015

sons of my mother were angry with me; they placed me as a keeper of the vineyard. My vineyard which belongs to me I have not kept.” The verb נטר “to keep/guard” admittedly, is not used in Song 1:6b to represent an antagonistic force that is surrounding a city but designates the woman as a guardian of her brothers’ vineyards. However, this designation of her as a נטרה “keeper/guardian” situates her in the vineyard in a similar fashion to the daughter of Zion, i.e., surrounded by agriculture. The result of this placement in the vineyards causes separation between the woman and her beloved.

Other uses of נטר/נצר in the Hebrew sections of the Masoretic text refer to holding on to anger or a grudge (Lev 19:18; Jer 3:5, 12; Nah 1:2; Ps 103:9). In the Aramaic section of Daniel, נטר refers to “keeping something to yourself” (Dan 7:28). Additionally, Aramaic documents in the non-biblical Dead Sea Scrolls, נטר refers to “keeping/protecting something” (4Q542).⁸⁷ The Hebrew term נצר means to “keep or protect” (Exodus 34:7, Psalm 31:24, Proverbs 13:3; 16:17) and “to adhere to a command” (4Q534,⁸⁸ Psalms 25:10; Proverbs 28:7). It also means “to withhold information” from another individual (11Qtg Job 21:7). The participle form of נצר also includes watchmen who protect an area, (2 Kings 17:9, Jeremiah 4:16; Jeremiah 31:6).

Based on the above evidence, נטר/נצר in the participle form share the same semantic domains as שמר: guardian of a person, place, or thing in a military or non-military context, guardian in a metaphorical sense, i.e., of an ideal, and keeping something to oneself. The above examples demonstrate that שמר and נטר/נצר have significant overlap to the point where both words are used interchangeably, sharing semantic domains.

⁸⁷ Edward M. Cook, *Dictionary of Qumran Aramaic* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2015), 156.

⁸⁸ Cook, *Dictionary of Qumran Aramaic*, 156.

The Greek words φυλασσω and τηρεω are used to translate שמר and its synonyms. From what I have found, they are used interchangeably and do not appear to highlight specific nuances.

Now that the semantic domains of שמר and נצר/נטר have been established, I will present in the next chapter the next step of my investigation. The goal will be to determine which lexical meanings and semantic domains are in view in the passages of the Song of Songs that involve the watchmen. I will accomplish this by comparing them to parallel passages in the wider MT canon that contain similar characteristics. Then I will investigate parallel texts that contain similar characteristics to the brothers' passages and determine how they are viewed in the text. Finally, I will ascertain if there is any overlap in meaning and function between the domains of the brothers and the watchmen in the Song of Songs.

CHAPTER 4

PARRALLEL PASSAGES IN THE WIDER MT CANON

The next step of my investigation is to discover which lexical and semantic usage of שמר is at play when it is combined with the terms that I have outlined in my translations in chapter 2. By way of review, the following are the terms that I will investigate: הפּוֹרְקִים בְּעִיר “the ones who patrol in the city,” שְׁמָרֵי הַחֲמוֹת “the watchers of the walls,” נָכַח “to strike,” פָּצַע “to wound,” נָשָׂא “to lift up/take away.” I will also investigate their relationship to the Hebrew terms for daughter, woman, and sister. The goal is to find parallel passages that can help to determine the specific lexical meaning and semantic domain that is in view for the “watchmen” in the Song of Songs.

The first phrase that I will investigate is הַשְּׁמָרִים הַפּוֹרְקִים בְּעִיר “the watchmen who patrol in the city.” In this phrase, the term הַשְּׁמָרִים is a participle that is functioning as a noun, and it is being modified by הַפּוֹרְקִים, which is also a participle which functions as an adjective. The prepositional phrase בְּעִיר identifies the location where the action of the הַשְּׁמָרִים takes place. In my search I specifically looked for passages that contained הַשְּׁמָרִים in the participle form modified by הַפּוֹרְקִים in the participle form, followed by the prepositional phrase בְּעִיר. A search of the exact phrase detailed above only produced results in the Song of Songs (3:3 and 5:7). I then expanded my search to include סָבַב with an alternate verbal form interacting with the above phrase. Unfortunately, this did not yield any additional results in the wider Old Testament canon.

The closest phrase that I found was וְאַסְתַּבְּחָהּ בְּעִיר, which occurs in Song 3:2.

Song of Songs 3:2

אֶלְוָמָה נָא וְאַסְתַּבְּחָהּ בְּעִיר בְּשֹׁנוֹתֶיךָ וְיִבְרַח חֲבוֹתֶיךָ אֶבְקֹשֶׁה אֶת שְׂאֵתְהָ נִפְשִׁי בְקִשְׁתּוֹ וְלֹא מִצְאָתִי:

² “I will rise, and I will move about in the city, in the streets and in the plazas. I will look for the one whom my soul loves. I looked for him and did not find him.”

In this passage, וְאֶסְבֵּב “I will move around” is a cohortative verb and expresses the woman’s deep desire to find her beloved. The prepositional phrases בְּשִׁוְקִים וּבְרַחֲבֹת each contain a בְּ of location indicating that the scene is taking place inside the spatial confines of a city. This helps to limit the meaning of סָבַב, which includes “to turn, to go around,”⁸⁹ to “movement within a given space or location” (also Eccl. 15:5 and 2 Chr, 17:9). I carried out a similar search where I replaced הַשְּׁמָרִים with נָצַר/נָטַר in identical participle forms, but I did not find any corresponding constructions.

According to Barbiero the presence of the watchmen within the city identifies them as an institution separate from the normative watchmen that were used in Israel i.e., watchmen that were stationed on city walls. “The generic *šōm^erîm* (‘watchmen’) is qualified in the text by the *hassōb^e’îm bā’îr* (‘as they made their rounds through the city’). The expression corresponds exactly to the Hellenistic institution of the *peripoloi*.”⁹⁰ It is certainly possible that הַשְּׁמָרִים הַסְּבִיבִים בְּעִיר refers to a separate institution from the guardians of the city walls, but it does not necessarily mean that they are a later Hellenistic institution. As demonstrated earlier in my lexical study, שְׁמָרִים/שָׁמַר could refer to several groups that are located within a city: the watchmen who guard the temple, the guardians of the king’s palace, or guardians that are responsible for an individual in a city. It is theoretically possible that the watchmen in Song 3:3 could refer to a different protective entity that is present within the city and not limited to the watchmen who guard it.

⁸⁹ HALOT 1:739.

⁹⁰ Barbiero, *Song of Songs a Close Reading*, 133.

The next phrase is שמרי החומות “watchers of the walls,” which first appears in Song 5:7 as an additional designation given to השמרים הסבכים בעיר. Like the previous phrase, שמרי is a participle, except in this instance it is in the construct state and connected to החומות which describes what they are watching. In Song of Songs 5:7 the השמרים הסבכים בעיר appear to be identified as the שמרי החומות through parallelism, indicating that these שמר/ים are interacting with a wall in some way. “Far from being a superfluous addition, ‘tacked on’ at the end of the utterance,” the phrase, “watchers of the walls,” is used to add a degree of emphasis and demonstrate exasperation on the part of the woman of the Song. Such a device “is often used in writing to imitate everyday spoken usage, as in English, ‘They haven’t done a thing for the environment, those scientists!’”⁹¹ Given the similarities between Song 3:1-5 and 5:2-8, it could be argued that both sets of watchmen have the same occupation.

Outside of the Song of Songs, this exact phrase does not appear. Given this, I decided to expand my search to include passages where השמרים or שמרי interact with the term for “city wall” החומות in some way. This was more fruitful and yielded results that can assist in understanding the watchmen. Isaiah 62:6, is the first example in the MT where the terms השמרים and החומות appear in the same context, but not in the same phrase.

על־חומתֶיךָ יְרוּשָׁלַם הַפְּקֻדָּתַי שְׁמָרִים כָּל־הַיּוֹם וְכָל־הַלַּיְלָה תָּמִיד לֹא יִחַשּׁוּ הַמְּזַכְּרִים אֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי לְבָבֵי לְכֶם:⁶

⁶ Upon your walls Jerusalem, I have appointed watchmen. All day and all night they will not keep silent forever. The ones who remember the LORD do not take rest.

The context of this verse is the promised restoration of Jerusalem by God, of which the watchmen are a part. The phrase על־חומתֶיךָ יְרוּשָׁלַם הַפְּקֻדָּתַי שְׁמָרִים, begins with a preposition of

⁹¹ Ariel Bloch and Chana Bloch, *The Song of Songs: A New Translation*, 183.

location, and situates the שְׁמָרִים as an appointed form of protection. Their appointed task— כָּל־הַיּוֹם וְכָל־הַלַּיְלָה תִּמְיֹד לֹא יִחַשׁוּ הַמְּזַכְרִים אֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי־דָמֵי לְכֶם, according to Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer, “focuses on the intercessory aspects of the watchman metaphor. In this way, he (Isaiah) seeks to convey to the Judahite leaders the importance of intercession for the fulfilment of God's promises to restore Jerusalem.”⁹² The שְׁמָרִים/שָׁמֵר in this light, are viewed positively as a protective and intercessory force that are concerned about the well-being of the people. This fits with the domain of a watchmen as a protector of a city.

Jeremiah 51:12 presents the שְׁמָרֵי הַחֻמּוֹת in a light that is closer to the understanding of Judges 1:23-25. Where I established earlier that the שְׁמָרִים/שָׁמֵר are viewed as spies that precede an invasion to find weaknesses in an enemy's defenses. Jeremiah 51:12 reads as follows.

אֶל־חֻמַּת בָּבֶל שְׂאוּ־גֹם הַחֻמּוֹת הַמְּשֻׁמְרִים הַקִּימוּ שְׁמָרִים הַכִּיְנוּ הָאֲרָבִים כִּי גַם־זָמַם יְהוָה גַּם־עָשָׂה אֶת אֲשֶׁר־דִּבֶּר
אֶל־יְשֻׁבֵי בָבֶל:

¹² Toward the walls of Babylon lift up the standard. Post a strong watch, raise up watchmen, ambushers strike! For what the LORD planned he also will do what he spoke concerning the inhabitants of Babylon.

This verse refers to part of the promised punishment that God will bring upon Babylon in Jeremiah 51. War preparations are continued in this section that began in verses 1-5. “YHWH orders the armies to sharpen arrows, raise the standard, post sentinels, and prepare ambushes.”⁹³ The phrase אֶל־חֻמַּת בָּבֶל שְׂאוּ־גֹם “toward the walls of Babylon lift up a standard” indicates that there is an action being taken against the walls of Babylon. The שְׁמָרִים here serve a different function than they did in Isaiah 62:6. They are not placed “on the walls” עַל־חֻמַּת of Babylon but are instead raised in response to the signal that is given to start the attack. The following clauses,

⁹² Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer, “The Watchmen Metaphor in Isaiah,” *VT* 55 (2005): 400.

⁹³ Athalya Brenner, *The Song of Solomon*, 525.

הַקִּימוּ שְׂמָרִים הַכִּינוּ הָאֲרָבִים, are both headed by an imperative verb in the hifil form with a similar vowel formation and sound, forming a possible rhyming scheme and parallelism. This appears to indicate that the two groups are related, where both entities serve as a hostile actor against the walls of Babylon. The שְׂמָרִים serving as spies that precede the main attack by the הָאֲרָבִים. They could also serve as participants in a hermetic siege which “requires forces to be positioned around the entire city, at maximum proximity to its external fortifications.”⁹⁴ In this way, they would be guarding the besieging camps situated against the walls of Babylon. In either case, the “watchmen” in this context are viewed as a hostile force rather than a protective one.

The final phrase that I investigated was הַכּוּנִי פָּצְעוּנִי נָשְׂאוּ “they struck me, they wounded me, they took away” in Song 5:7. I limited my search to passages where a woman is the direct object of the aforementioned violent actions. This exact phrase does not occur outside the Song of Songs, but a similar, although not direct, parallel occurs in 1 Kings 20:37. I will present the parallel passages together below.

1 Kings 20:37

וַיִּמְצָא אִישׁ אֶחָד וַיֹּאמֶר הַכִּינוּ נָא וַיִּכֶהוּ הָאִישׁ הַכָּה וּפָצַע:

Then he found another man and said, strike me! And the man struck him, striking and wounding him.

Song of Songs 5:7

מְצָאֵנִי הַשְּׂמָרִים הַסֹּבְבִים בְּעִיר הַכּוּנִי פָּצְעוּנִי נָשְׂאוּ אֶת־רִדְדִי מֵעָלַי שְׂמָרֵי הַחֲמוֹת:

The watchmen patrolling in the city found me. They struck me, they wounded me, they removed my veil from me, the watchers of the walls.

⁹⁴ Israel Eph'al, *The City Besieged: Siege and Its Manifestations in the Ancient Near East*, CHANE 36 (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2009), 35.

In 1 Kings 20, a prophet is searching for a man to wound him so he can deliver a prophetic message to the king. He eventually asks two men to do so because the first man refuses. This contrasts with the woman who is attacked by the watchmen while she is searching for her beloved after initially denying his advances. 1 Kings 20:38-39 informs us that the wound was severe but not deadly, as the prophet was successfully able to masquerade as a wounded soldier. It would not be farfetched to surmise that the wound inflicted upon the woman was similarly grievous.

I found more data when I searched the phrases נִכְהוּת נִכְה and נִכְהוּת נִכְה independent of the rest of the phrase in Song 5:7. Num 25:18 was one of the results for the terms נִכְהוּת נִכְה and נִכְהוּת נִכְה. It details how Cozbi, a daughter of a Midianite chieftain, was executed by Phinehas because she seduced an Israelite man to abandon God in a sexual and spiritual sense. This could lend credence to the idea that the watchmen in Song 5:7 took the behavior of the woman to “resemble that of the prostitute in Proverbs 7:9-10, walking the streets of the city seeking custom.”⁹⁵ The terms נִכְהוּת נִכְה also relate to women who are attacked and sometimes killed because they lived in a town that was invaded, as happens in Judges 21:10 and 1 Sam 15:3. It is not far-fetched to suggest that the enemy soldiers would roam throughout a city searching for inhabitants to kill.

In summary, the above passages limited by the terms and phrases that I have outlined in my methodology illustrate the alternate usages of שֹׁמְרֵי. Someone who is a “watcher of the walls” can be: a guardian of a city, the vanguard of an invading force, or the guardian of a camp of a besieging enemy. This has implications for Song 5 2:5, where the שֹׁמְרֵי are depicted as

⁹⁵ Duguid, *The Song of Songs: An Introduction and Commentary*, 128.

violent and where the aspect of a guardian does not appear to fit within the context. Also, violent acts that are perpetrated against women, which include the word נכה, often involve killing a seductress or women who inhabit an invaded city.

Parallel Passages Concerning the Brothers in the Song of Songs

In order to find parallel passages to the brother texts in the Song of Songs, I will use the following terms, which describe specific actions and characteristics of the brothers in the Song of Songs. First, בני אמי “mother’s sons” of the אחות קטנה “little sister” will be the subject of the following actions: נחררבי “to be angry,” שלמי “to set/put,” מה נעשה לאחתינו ביום שיזבר-בה “what will we do for her in the day she is spoken for,” נבנה עליה טירת כסף “build on her ramparts of silver,” and נצור עליה לוח ארז “we will encase her with boards of cedar.”

The phrases בני אמי “mother’s sons” and אחות לנו קטנה “we have little sister” did not yield any results when combined with the actions that I identified earlier; other than the original passages where they are found in the Song of Songs. I then expanded my search to include the term אח “brother,” which yielded additional results. The term אח, “brother” when connected to נחר “to be angry,” did not yield any results as this specific word for “anger” appears only in Song of Songs 1:5. I then expanded my search to include the word חרה “to become hot, angry,” because it is a related word with a similar meaning. I specifically searched for “brothers” who displayed anger toward or on behalf of a sibling.

The story of Cain and Abel in Genesis 4 is my first example and is also the first instance of sibling anger in the MT. Cain’s anger toward Abel is recounted in Genesis 4:3-5,

וְהָיָה מִקֵּץ יָמִים וַתֵּבֵא קַיִן מִפְּרֵי הָאֲדָמָה מִנְחָה לַיהוָה: וְהָבֵל הֵבִיא גַם־הוּא מִבְּכֹרוֹת צֹאנוֹ וּמִחֶלְבֶהָן וַיִּשַׁע יְהוָה אֶל־הָבֵל וְאֶל־מִנְחָתוֹ: וְאֶל־קַיִן וְאֶל־מִנְחָתוֹ לֹא שָׁעָה וַיַּחַר לְקַיִן מְאֹד וַיִּפְּלוּ פָּנָיו:

And it happened during the appointed time Cain brought a sacrifice to the LORD from the fruit of the ground. Abel brought also from the firstborn of his flock and their fat. And the LORD looked toward Abel and his sacrifice, but to Cain and his sacrifice he did not look at. Then Cain became very angry, and his face was fallen.

The anger that Cain felt was a result of his offering being overlooked by the LORD, suggesting that it was caused by jealousy. That his anger was directed toward Abel is evident by his actions toward him in verse 8, where he kills him in the field (open country). Curiously, the violent action that Cain carries out against Abel is located in the field, which is similar to the vineyards where the mother's sons carry out their angry action against the woman of the Song. Although שָׂדֵה "open field"⁹⁶ is merely an outside area, which could be pastureland rather than a vineyard, both passages contain outdoor violence. The anger of Cain also leads to an abdication of his responsibility as the older brother. When the LORD asks Cain in verse 9 "Where is Abel your brother," Cain responds: יָדַעְתִּי הֲשֹׁמֵר אָהִי אָנֹכִי "I do not know, am I my brother's guardian?" The use of הֲשֹׁמֵר implies that Cain as the older brother has some sort of guardian role and the fact that the LORD expected Cain to know Abel's whereabouts adds credence to this. Cain's anger because of jealousy toward his brother turns him from protector to aggressor.

The next examples of brotherly anger are on behalf of a sister instead of directed at her. The stories of Dinah and Shechem in Genesis 34 and Amnon and Tammar in 2 Samuel 13 contain instances of brothers who became angry because of sexual assault carried out against their sister. In Genesis 34 Dinah is assaulted by Shechem who subsequently falls in love with her and לְדַבֵּר אֵתוֹ "asks for her" hand in marriage (Gen 34:6). Upon hearing this, the brothers נִחַר לָהֶם "became very angry" (Gen 34:7) and hatch a plan for retaliation. Notably both the brothers and their father are addressed in the marriage negotiations. However, the brothers respond and

⁹⁶ HALOT 2:1307.

set the price for their sister's hand, suggesting that they played a key role in the betrothal process. This finds a parallel in Song 8:8-9 where the siblings of the "little sister" are concerned with her betrothal. This passage also provides an example of brothers taking military action against a city. Two of the brothers, Levi and Judah, kill every man and plunder the city (Gen 34:25). A similar thing occurs in 2 Samuel 13. Tamar, after being lured into the room of her brother Amnon, is sexually assaulted, and removed from his presence. Absalom becomes angry in response and instigates a plan to kill Amnon.

These texts provide insight into what motivates sibling anger and the actions that result from it: (1) Jealousy, which leads to hostile action or speech against the object of anger. This hostile action can take the form of murder and the abdication of the guardian duty that a brother has for his sibling. (2) Anger as a result of sexual assault committed against a sister, which leads to retribution. This can include the execution of the perpetrator or the destruction of and sacking of an entire city. These insights affect the semantic domain of אח "brother" which according to the above can be a guardian of or an adversary to a younger sibling. Also included is a brother who takes part in military action.

The search for אח "brother" connected to the terms נִבְנְהָ עָלֶיהָ "we will build on her," and נִצְוֹר עָלֶיהָ "we will encase her" did not yield any results in the wider MT canon. I then expanded my search to include passages that do not contain the term אח "brother," but that do have the phrases עָלֶיהָ "we will build on her," and נִצְוֹר עָלֶיהָ "we will encase her." Initially, I investigated the complete phrase טִירַת כֶּסֶף נִבְנְהָ עָלֶיהָ "we will build on her ramparts of silver" and Song of Songs 8:9 was the only result in the entirety of MT. I did however find a similar text in the LXX.

In Isaiah 54:12 the Greek word ἐπέλαξεῖς,⁹⁷ used to translate טִירָה in Song 8:9, in this text is used to translate the Hebrew word שְׂמִשָּׁה “battlement.”⁹⁸ This word is used to describe an event that is similar to the fortification/ beautification process of the brothers in Song 8:9. In this text, God says to Israel, “I will set your bulwarks with rubies and your gates with beryl stones.” This is used as a form of comfort for the afflicted people that are mentioned in the previous verse. It is clear that God does not have in mind actual battle fortifications and is instead decorating the walls of Israel, using precious stones that would not be suitable for repelling an attacking force. Based on the similarities, it is possible that the siblings of the “little sister” in Song 8:8-9 have glorification in mind when building bulwarks of silver on their sister.

The phrase יָבִנוּ עָלֶיהָ “appears to be technical siege language, used to describe actions the enemy takes in siege warfare”⁹⁹ most often involving the construction of siege works around a city. This is the case in 2 Kings 25:1b: וַיִּחַן עָלֶיהָ וַיִּבְנוּ עָלֶיהָ דִּיק כְּבִיב, “and he encamped around it and then he built on it a siege wall all around.” A similar phenomenon occurs in Deuteronomy 20:19-20, Jeremiah 52:4 and Ezekiel 4:2, where siege walls are also constructed around cities.

By contrast the phrase is used positively in Ecclesiastes 9:14.

עִיר קְטַנָּה וְאֲנָשִׁים בָּהּ מְעַט וּבְאֲ-אֱלִיָּהּ מֶלֶךְ גָּדוֹל וְסָבַב אֹתָהּ וַיִּבְנֶה עָלֶיהָ מִצְדוֹתִים גְּדוֹלִים:

There was a small city with few men in it. Then a great king came to it, and he went around it and he built on it, great fortifications.

This city, instead of being besieged, is fortified with walls for its protection. The use of סְבִיב indicates that the fortifications are built around the outside of the city, i.e., encircling it, designed to keep invaders out.

⁹⁷ Johan Lust, Erik Eynikel, and Katrin Hauspie, *Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2003), 220.

⁹⁸ HALOT 2:1592.

⁹⁹ James, “A City who Surrenders,” 452.

The phrase צור עֲלֶיהָ is used in numerous places in the MT to refer to the act of laying siege to a city. Ezekiel 4:3 and Deuteronomy 20:12 are good examples, with Deut 20:19-20 including trees as a part of the siege process.

וְאִם-לֹא תִשְׁלִים עִמָּךְ וְעָשְׂתָה עִמָּךְ מִלְחָמָה וְצָרְתָּ עָלֶיהָ¹²

בְּקַעַץ אֲשֶׁר-תִּדְעַע כִּי-לֹא-עֵץ מֵאֲכָלִי הוּא אֶתְּוֹ תִשְׁחִית וְכָרְתָּ וּבְנִיתָ מִצֹּר עַל-הָעִיר אֲשֶׁר-
הוּא עֹשֶׂה עִמָּךְ מִלְחָמָה עַד רִדְתָּהּ:²⁰

¹²And if it (the enemy city) does not make peace with you and it makes war with you, then you will lay siege to it.

²⁰ Only the trees that you know are not fruit trees you shall destroy and cut down, so that you may construct siegeworks against the city that is making war against you until it falls.¹⁰⁰

Based on the above example, צור עֲלֶיהָ has a military usage in the context of besieging a city, and wood is used as part of the siege works. This appears to have an echo in Song 8:9, where the siblings of the “little sister” נָצוּר עָלֶיהָ לִחַם אֲרָזוֹ “lay siege/encircle her with boards of cedar.” The phrase צור עֲלֶיהָ “is also technical siege language, which refers to military advances taken against a city. The siege might require that additional structures of fortifications be erected by the attacking army,”¹⁰¹ possibly in the construction of a siege ramp where “beams and branches were sunk into its upper layer to enhance its stability.”¹⁰² This understanding would fit with the perceived hostility that the brothers exhibit toward the woman in Song 8:8-9.

However, it is the דלת “door” that is being affixed with cedar boards not a wall, and the term siege ramp is not included in the passage. The word for barricade צור is often translated “to encircle (lay siege), to bind, to fight against,” and in some cases “to form.”¹⁰³ It is used mostly in

¹⁰⁰ NASB

¹⁰¹ James, “A City who Surrenders,” 453.

¹⁰² Eph‘al, *The City Besieged*, 88.

¹⁰³ HALOT 2:1015.

a military context involving conflict between two opposing parties. Its usage here could indicate that the דלת “door” represents the “door of a gate and expresses the same idea of enclosure, where the door is being secured against battering rams.”¹⁰⁴ Instead of the brothers laying siege to their sister, they are fortifying her from besieging suitors.

In summary צור עָלֶיהָ and יָבְנוּ עָלֶיהָ are most often related to the act of laying siege and the construction of siege works. יָבְנוּ עָלֶיהָ can also include constructing fortifications for the defense of a city. In both instances, constructing siege works, or building fortifications, surround an entire city and enclose it. The implication for the woman of the Song is that she is surrounded by her brothers who seek to shield or isolate her, which causes difficulty in her relationship with them and with her lover.

¹⁰⁴ Goulder, *The Song of Fourteen Songs*, 66.

CHAPTER 5

REALTIONSHIP BETWEEN THE WATCHMEN AND THE BROTHERS

In the preceding chapter, I have explored parallel passages that provide additional insight into the lexical meaning and semantic domain of the “watchmen” and the “brothers” in the Song of Songs. Based on the evidence, there appear to be thematic and functional similarities between the watchmen and the brothers in the Song. Their main point of intersection is demonstrated in their roles as patroller of a city, the watchmen, and fortifier of the woman who is described as a city, the brothers. Therefore, I believe that it is important to briefly investigate how the Song of Songs uses city and fortification imagery to describe the woman of the Song. Overall, this affects the understanding of the watchmen and the brothers.

The Woman as City in the Song of Songs

The term עיר “city” is explicitly mentioned in Song of Songs 3:2,3 and 5:7, where it refers to the area that the woman of the Song initiates her nocturnal search for her lost lover. In Song of Songs 6:4, the woman is compared to two named cities—Tirzah and Jerusalem. “You are beautiful as Tirzah, my love, lovely as Jerusalem, awesome as an army with banners.”¹⁰⁵ According to Verde, these metaphors are meant to express the conceptual metaphor “beauty is force” by blending the concepts “beautiful, longed for, and frightening,” to highlight the concept that beauty “simultaneously attracts and overpowers.”¹⁰⁶ Therefore the pursuit by the man in the Song could be seen as similar to an army advancing on a well-defended city. The terms מגדל

¹⁰⁵ ESV

¹⁰⁶ Verde, *Conquered Conquerors*, 75.

“tower” and חומה “city wall” are also used to describe another aspect of the woman and are often features of an ancient city, i.e., its defenses.¹⁰⁷

The term מגדל “tower” appears four times in the Song of Songs, where three of those occurrences are used to describe the woman.

[Cant 4:4] Your neck is like the tower of David, built in rows of stone; on it hang a thousand shields, all of them shields of warriors.

[Cant 7:4] (7:5 Hebrew) Your neck is like an ivory tower. Your eyes are pools in Heshbon, by the gate of Bath-rabbim. Your nose is like a tower of Lebanon, which looks toward Damascus.

[Cant 8:10] I was a wall, and my breasts were like towers; then I was in his eyes as one who finds¹⁰⁸ peace.¹⁰⁹

Elaine T. James suggests that the towers in the Song of Songs have a militaristic application. Discussing Song of Songs 4:4 She says,

The tower was a key fortification feature of a city wall, providing reinforcement and a defensive position adjacent to the vulnerable city gate. This is a military connotation that is bolstered in two ways: first, by the “shields of warriors” hung upon it, and second, by its association with the name of David, whose military prowess is celebrated in biblical texts (e.g., r Sam 17; 18:5-7; r Chron 18-20). A similar emphasis on militarism and the city can be noted in the other descriptive poems of the young woman (e.g., 6:4; 7:5 [Heb; 7:4 Eng]). The young man perceives the young woman as a distant, militarized city, and the metaphor positions him as an approaching enemy.¹¹⁰

Based on James’s suggestion, it could be argued that the tower refers to the inaccessibility of the woman. This fits the context as Song 4:4 occurs in the wedding song, located in section E of Davidson’s outline.¹¹¹ There are several terms in the wedding song (4:1-5:1) that highlight this inaccessibility. The phrase מבעד לצמתך “from behind your veil” is

¹⁰⁷ Verde, *Conquered Conquerors*, 51.

¹⁰⁸ Or brings

¹⁰⁹ ESV

¹¹⁰ Elaine T. James, “A City Who Surrenders: Song 8:8-10,” *Vetus Testamentum* 67 (2017): 451.

¹¹¹ Davidson, “The Literary Structure,” 50.

described as an item that obscures different parts of the woman’s face from her beloved (eyes Cant 4:1, temple Cant 4:3), illustrating that part of her is inaccessible. The final element in the wedding Song (4:12) is the most direct in pointing out this fact.

[4:12] A garden locked is my sister, my bride,
a spring locked, a fountain sealed.¹¹²

It is only after this section that she becomes accessible to him, and they can enjoy each other’s delights.

Gault views the architectural imagery in Song of Songs 7:4 as perhaps “symbolizing both strength and peace...the lover here likens his lady’s neck to a strong tower, whose weaponry may symbolize the security and peace that he finds in her.”¹¹³

The term חומה “city wall” appears three times in the Song of Songs (5:7; 8:9-10), and the word כהל “wall” appears once (Song 2:9). Davidson offers this suggestion regarding the usage of חומה “city wall” in Song of Songs 8:9-10.

The brothers use the metaphor of “wall” (Heb. *khomah*) and “door” (Heb. *delet*) to symbolize the two paths their sister could choose as a young woman: to be pure and inaccessible (a wall) or to be promiscuous and “available” (a doorway). The brothers determine to provide additional protection if she is a “wall”; they will build on her defensive “wall coping or battlement [Heb. *tirah*] of silver”. . . . If she is a “door” they will “barricade [Heb. *tsur* + ‘*al*, lit. ‘to force against’] her with planks [Heb. *luakh*] of cedar” (NASB). . . . The Shulamite makes clear that she has been morally pure, impregnable to the advances of anyone but her husband. Using the language of military fortifications, the Shulamite affirms that she was/is a “wall,” and her breasts like “towers” (Heb. *migdal* pl.) Solomon’s knowledge of her faithfulness made her in his eyes “as one who found/finds [Heb. *qal* fem. sg. ptc. of *matsa*’ in *hiphil*, ‘one who finds’] *shalom*! The Shulamite here continues the comparison with military towers and their battlements, safeguarding peace for the *inhabitants* inside.¹¹⁴

¹¹² ESV

¹¹³ Gault, *Body as Landscape*, 173.

¹¹⁴ Richard M. Davidson, “Song of Songs,” in *Seventh-day Adventist International Bible Commentary*, vol. 6: *Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, Richard M. Davidson, Martin G. Klingbeil, Dragoslava Santrac, David R. Tasker, and Jacques B. Doukhan, co-authors (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press; Silver Spring, MD: Review and Herald, 2022), 1371.

I find it convincing that this usage of חומה “wall” has to do with the inaccessibility of the woman, based on Davidson’s analysis. In Song of Songs 2:9, כהל “wall” refers to the wall of a house and although it is not the same as a חומה “city wall,” it still highlights the woman’s separation from her beloved. It would appear then, that inaccessibility and security is what the “woman as city” metaphor is trying to convey. Based on this, is it plausible to read Song 3:1-5 and Song 5:2-8 as actions taken by the brothers against the woman of the Song?

The Watchmen and the Brothers

To answer this question, it is important to revisit the linguistic connections suggested by the LXX that connect Song 1:6 and 5:7 as well as Song 3:3 and 8:11-12. Below is an outline of these connections, with key words in bold.

Septuagint

Song of Songs 1:6

μη βλέψητέ με ὅτι ἐγὼ εἶμι μεμελανωμένη ὅτι
παρέβλεψέν με ὁ ἥλιος υἱοὶ μητρός μου
ἐμαχέσαντο ἐν ἐμοί ἔθεντό με **φυλάκισσαν** ἐν
ἀμπελῶσιν ἀμπελῶνα ἐμὸν οὐκ **ἐφύλαξα**

Do not look at me because I am dark, because the sun has looked upon me. My mother’s sons fought with me; they placed me as a keeper in the vineyards *but* my vineyard I did not keep.¹¹⁵

Song of Songs 3:3

εὔροσάν με **οἱ τηροῦντες** οἱ κυκλοῦντες ἐν τῇ
πόλει μη ὄν ἠγάπησεν ἢ ψυχὴ μου εἶδετε

They found me, the watchmen who patrol in the city. Have you seen the one whom my soul loves?

Masoretic Text

Song of Songs 1:6

אַל־תִּרְאוּנִי שְׁאֲנִי שְׁחַחְחִרְתָּ שְׁשָׁזְפַתְנִי הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ בְּנִי אֲמִי
נִקְרָרְבִי שְׁמִנִי נִטְרָה אֶת־הַכְּרָמִים כְּרָמִי שְׁלִי לֹא נִטְרָתִי:

Do not look at me because I am dark, because the sun has looked upon me. My mother’s sons were angry with me; they placed me as a keeper of the vineyards *but* my vineyard which belongs to me, I did not keep.

Song of Songs 3:3

מִצְאוּנִי הַשֹּׁמְרִים הַסֹּבְבִים בְּעִיר אֶת שְׁאֵהֶבָה נִפְשִׁי
רְאוּתָם:

They found me, the watchmen who patrol in the city. Have you seen/you have seen the one whom my soul loves?

¹¹⁵ The translations are mine unless otherwise stated.

Song of Songs 5:7

εὔροσάν με οἱ φύλακες οἱ κυκλοῦντες ἐν τῇ πόλει ἐπάταξάν με ἐτραυμάτισάν με ἦραν τὸ θέριστρόν μου ἀπ' ἐμοῦ φύλακες τῶν τειχέων

They found me, the watchmen who patrol in the city. They struck me, they wounded me, they took away my veil from me; the watchers of the walls.

Song of Songs 8:11-12

ἀμπελῶν ἐγενήθη τῷ Σαλωμων ἐν Βεελαμων ἔδωκεν τὸν ἀμπελῶνα αὐτοῦ τοῖς τηροῦσιν ἀνήρ οἷσει ἐν καρπῷ αὐτοῦ χιλίους ἀργυρίου

ἀμπελῶν μου ἐμὸς ἐνώπιόν μου οἱ χίλιοι σοὶ Σαλωμων καὶ οἱ διακόσιοι τοῖς τηροῦσι τὸν καρπὸν αὐτοῦ

A vineyard belonged to Solomon in Belhamon; he entrusted his vineyard to the keepers; each man would bring a thousand silver for its fruit.

My vineyard which is mine is before me; the thousand is for you, Solomon, and the two hundred for the keepers of its fruit.

Song of Songs 5:7

מִצְאֵנִי הַשְּׁמָרִים הַסֹּבְבִים בְּעִיר הַכּוֹנֵי פְּצָעוּנִי נָשְׂאוּ אֶת־רִדְיִי מֵעַלִי שְׁמָרֵי הַחֲמוֹת:

They found me, the watchmen who patrol in the city. They struck me, they injured me, they removed my veil from me; the watchers of the walls.

Song of Songs 8:11-12

כָּרֶם הָיָה לְשִׁלְמָה בְּבַעַל הַמֶּזֶךְ נָתַן אֶת־הַכָּרֶם לְנֹטְרִים אִישׁ יָבֵא בְּפָרְיוֹ אֶלֶף כֶּסֶף:

כָּרְמִי שְׁלִי לִפְנֵי הָאֵלֶּף לָךְ שְׁלֵמָה וּמְאֵתָיִם לְנֹטְרִים אֶת־פְּרִיה:

A vineyard belonged to Solomon in Belhamon; he entrusted his vineyard to the keepers; each man would bring a thousand silver for its fruit.

My vineyard which is mine is before me; the thousand is for you, Solomon, and the two hundred for the keepers of its fruit.

By way of review, נטר forms an inclusio in Song of Songs 1:5-6 and 8:8-12, as both passages contain parallel elements: references to brothers, sisters, vineyards, and watchmen, at the beginning and at the end of the Song. While שמר in Song of Songs 3:1-5 and 5:2-8 forms a panel parallelism, containing the same characters and setting, toward the center of the Song where both are on opposite ends of the wedding song in Song of Songs 4. The LXX, by contrast, connects Song of Songs 1:5 with 5:7 by offering as a translation the Greek word τηρεω, and 3:3 with 8:11-12 by using φυλασσω, presenting them as parallel passages.

The next question is whether these LXX parallels suggest a connection between the watchmen texts and the brothers. Song 5:2-8 starts with the woman sleeping/dreaming and subsequently disturbed by her beloved, who is attempting to have an intimate interaction with her (Song 5:2). She is hesitant or coy with him, according to some commentators,¹¹⁶ but he persists (Song 5:3-4). She has a change of heart and opens the door for him to find him gone and attempts to search for him (Song 5:5-6). Then she is found by the watchmen and is subsequently beaten by them (Song 5:7). This section is concluded with a plea to the daughters of Jerusalem to tell her beloved that she is love-sick. Song 1:2-8 progresses in a similar fashion. The woman, after declaring her desire for her beloved, is taken to the “chambers”¹¹⁷ of the king’s palace (Song 1:2-4). She then explains that her darker complexion is the result of her brothers’ anger and forced labor in the vineyards (Song 1:5-6). Finally, she asks her beloved where he has gone, and he responds to her by letting her know his location (Song 1:7-8).

The function of the brothers in this passage is clearly that of external aggressors who are attempting to exert some form of control over the woman. This takes the form of them surrounding her with vegetation by making her a “keeper” of the vineyards. The watchmen, on the other hand, do not appear until after the woman has already rejected her beloved, i.e., after the point at which separation has occurred. Therefore, they do not cause the separation, but appear to come as a result of it. Since this scene takes place within a city and the woman has been identified as a city through metaphorical language in several passages (Song 4:4; 6:4; 7:4; 8:10),¹¹⁸ it is plausible that what occurs in this passage—as well as in Song 3:1-5—is an internal event within the mind of the woman, whether through her own internal dialogue or through a

¹¹⁶ See Kinlaw, *Song of Songs*, 1232, and Exum, *Song of Songs*, 194.

¹¹⁷ For a discussion on a possible non-sexual understating of this passage see Davidson, *Song of Songs*, 1151.

¹¹⁸ See section, the Woman as City in the Song of Songs on page 61-64 of this thesis.

dream.¹¹⁹ Moreover, since it has been established in Chapter 4 that a “watcher of the walls” can be a hostile force and a woman who is נכה “struck” is within a city that is being invaded, it is plausible to consider the watchmen to be hostile forces who are attacking the city instead of defending it. Although in Jeremiah 51:12 and Judges 1:23-25 the threat of the watchmen begins outside of the city, it eventually moves inside of the city. It is probable then that the watchmen in Song 5:7 represent the internal negative feelings that invade the woman’s heart because of her slow response to open the door for her beloved. Although both the brothers and the watchmen are an antagonistic force and cause harm to the woman, both occupy different spheres: one is external (brothers) and the other internal (watchmen).

The same phenomenon occurs in Song 3:1-5 and 8:8-9. Song 3:1-5 occurs after the proposal of the man in Song 2:8-17 and appears to be her response to his request to follow him outside.¹²⁰ I believe that this is also an internal event in the mind of the woman for the same reasons given above, perhaps involving her trepidation at getting married or some other mental road-block.¹²¹ Because of their lack of hostility, the watchmen in this text would be a protective force like a “city guard.” The fact that she asks them the question, “have you seen my beloved,” implies that she expects some form of assistance. Also, the words ראה “to see” and שמר “to watch, guard” are related, as the use of one’s sight is essential to carry out the duties of a “city guard.” Unfortunately, the watchmen do not respond to her and are not helpful in her search. Despite this, she is eventually able to find her beloved.

¹¹⁹ Longman, *Song of Songs*, 169.

¹²⁰ See Davidson, *Song of Songs*, 1200-1216 for discussion on the proposal. And Exum, *Song of Songs*, 135 for discussion on the woman’s response.

¹²¹ Garrett and House, *Song of Songs, Lamentations*, 172.

The brothers in Song 8:8-9 once again attempt to be an impediment to the woman of the Song. Most commentators consider this section to be a memory that is being rehearsed so that the woman can express her independence from the control of her brothers.¹²² This is demonstrated in Song 8:11-12, where she is no longer responsible for maintaining the vineyards of others but is now able to tend to her own. The fortification or siege language in Song 8:8-9 positions the brothers as an external force meant to surround the woman to offer protection or restriction. However, they are no longer able to do this, and she is now free to love in peace.

Conclusion

In this study I think that I have convincingly argued that there is major semantic, thematic, and functional overlap between the watchmen and the brothers of the Song of Songs. First, they both occupy the domain of protector, and aggressor. Second, they are both described in the Song as interacting with a city, taking both peaceful and hostile actions. Third, the woman being identified metaphorically as a city appears to be the point of connection between the siege or fortification imagery of the brothers and the actions of the watchmen. However, the fact that the watchmen and the brothers both occur in different spheres in relation to the life of the woman—the watchmen internal and the brothers external—makes it difficult to assert that they are the same entity within the Song.

If Song 3:1-5 and 5:2-8 are in fact dream literature, then this leaves the door open for a symbolic interpretation in which the watchmen are a figurative representation of the brothers in the woman's dream. However, as I outlined in Chapter 2, it is unclear whether these passages fit the genre of a symbolic dream-vision and there is not a figure identified in the text as the

¹²² Spencer, "Feeling the Burn Angry Brothers Adamant Sister," 426-427.

interpreter. Here an exploration of other ANE dream literature would be useful, specifically, the form and function of dream literature in poetry and whether it is commonly considered symbolic.

Further, another major hinderance to considering the watchmen and the brothers as one entity is the lack of an explicit metaphor connecting the two. For example, a line in the Song that reads, “my brothers were like watchmen unto me,” would resolve this issue. Unfortunately, no such text exists in the Song of Songs. At most, it can be argued that the watchmen and the brothers mirror each other by representing external and internal forces that impede the woman as she pursues and attempts to connect with her beloved.

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