

# Homiletics Analysis: Song of Solomon 7

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## Content & Intent

### This Text — Content

Song of Solomon 7 is the fourth and most expansive *waṣf* (descriptive praise poem) in the book, spoken predominantly by the Beloved (7:1–9) and then answered by the Shulamite herself (7:10–13). The chapter opens with what appears to be a continuation of the admiration scene from chapter 6, where the Beloved catalogs his bride from foot to head in loving, extravagant detail — sandaled feet, rounded thighs, navel, belly, breasts, neck, eyes, nose, head, and hair — employing images from architecture, nature, wine, and agriculture to express the totality of her beauty. This is the most complete and ascending *waṣf* in the book: unlike earlier poems that began with the face or moved more generally, this one begins at the feet and works upward, ending with the declaration that she has captured him utterly (7:5b). The movement reverses typical ancient Near Eastern aesthetic convention and places the entirety of the woman — from the ground up — within the gaze of loving admiration. The Beloved then announces his intention to ascend to the palm tree and take hold of its fruit (7:8–9), an unmistakably intimate image. The Shulamite responds with her third and final “I am my beloved’s and my beloved is mine” variation (7:10) — now in its most confident form, asserting that *his desire is for her* (a direct echo and reversal of Genesis 3:16), and she issues the invitation to go together into the countryside, the vineyards, the blossoming fields, where she will give him her love (7:11–13). The chapter ends with the promise of mandrakes, fragrant fruits, and gifts of love kept for him alone.

### This Text — Intent

God is using this passage to accomplish something more than the celebration of physical beauty or marital intimacy in the abstract. Through the extravagance of the *waṣf*, the complete mutuality of longing, and the Shulamite’s confident, desire-shaped invitation, God is restoring the vision of what human love — and, at the typological level, covenantal love — was always meant to be. The Shulamite’s declaration in 7:10 is the theological turning point of the entire book: *his desire is for me* — reversing the curse of Genesis 3:16, where the woman’s desire would be distorted and her relationship to man fractured. What God is seeking to accomplish through this chapter is the awakening of the reader to the goodness, fullness, and holiness of covenant love — love that sees completely, desires rightly, pursues persistently, and is received with confidence and reciprocity. Beneath the typological surface, God is pressing His people — and the Church — toward understanding how lavishly and specifically they are known and desired by their covenant Lord.

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**Subject Sentence:** Covenant love sees fully, desires completely, and is received with confident joy.

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**Primary Claim:** God is demonstrating through the fullness of mutual, rejoicing, covenant love that the distortions of the Fall are overturned in the relationship He designs — and that His own people are known and desired by Him with this same extravagant, specific, rejoicing love.

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## Interpretive Evaluation

### The Allegorical-Only Reading

The dominant pre-modern reading — shared by Rabbinic interpretation (the song as YHWH's love for Israel) and much of the Patristic and medieval church (the song as Christ's love for the soul or for the Church) — treats Song of Solomon 7 as having no genuine reference to human sexuality, reading the *waṣf* as entirely symbolic. Origen's commentary, the most influential of these, is representative: the ascending catalog from feet to head describes the spiritual progress of the soul toward God, with each anatomical reference translated into a spiritual virtue or state. This reading has generated genuine theological fruit — it has produced some of the richest writing on the believer's union with Christ in the history of the church — and its instinct that the Song carries typological freight pointing beyond itself is correct and must be retained. However, the allegorical-only reading must be *qualified* at the level of method: it bypasses the plain sense of the text without textual warrant, and in doing so it actually diminishes the Song's theological force. The Reformed and Protestant hermeneutic insists that the literal meaning is the primary meaning, and that the literal meaning of Song 7 — extravagant, rejoicing, embodied marital love — is not an embarrassment to be spiritualized away but is itself the vehicle through which the deeper truth is communicated. You cannot get to the typology by bypassing the literal; you get there *through* it.

### The Exclusively Literal Reading

The opposite error — reducing the Song to a collection of ancient love poetry with no theological or canonical significance — fails on different grounds. This reading (common in some critical scholarship) treats the book as ancient Near Eastern erotic literature that found its way into the canon for historical or cultural reasons, carrying no more theological weight than the Egyptian love poems it resembles in form. This reading must be *refuted*: the canonical placement of the Song, its deliberate intertextual connections to Genesis 1–3 (the garden imagery, the reversal of the Genesis 3 curse in 7:10), and its use in Israel's liturgical life (read at Passover) all argue for intentional theological function. The book is *about* human love, but it is in the canon because human love, rightly ordered, is itself a

theological statement — about God’s design, the Fall’s distortion, and redemption’s restoration.

### **The Redemptive-Historical Reading (Reformed Preferred)**

The Reformed reading holds both dimensions simultaneously: the Song speaks first and plainly about human marriage — the goodness of embodied, covenantal, rejoicing love between a husband and wife — and it does so in a manner that carries typological freight pointing toward the covenant relationship between God and His people, and ultimately between Christ and His Church. Song 7:10 is the hermeneutical key: the Shulamite’s declaration “I am my beloved’s, and his desire is for me” deliberately echoes and reverses Genesis 3:16 (“your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you”). The Fall distorted desire and fractured relationship. The Song — especially here in chapter 7 — depicts what redeemed, restored covenant love looks like: mutual, joyful, specific, fearless, and reciprocating. The typological layer does not replace the literal; it rides on top of it. The preacher who preaches Song 7 only as an illustration of Christ’s love for the Church without first honoring the literal goodness of marital love is as incomplete as the preacher who sees only the literal and misses the covenant theology encoded in it.

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### **Key Canonical Support**

- **Genesis 1:31; 2:18–25** — God’s declaration that embodied human love is “very good” and that the covenant of marriage is His own design; Song 7 presupposes this foundation and celebrates its fullness. The garden setting of Song 7:11–12 deliberately echoes Eden restored.
- **Genesis 3:16** — The curse that distorts the woman’s desire and fractures the man-woman relationship; Song 7:10 (“his desire is for me”) is a direct intertextual reversal and the theological pivot of the entire chapter — and arguably of the book.
- **Hosea 2:14–23** — YHWH’s promise to woo Israel back into the wilderness, to speak tenderly to her, and to restore the covenant of love — the covenantal dimension of the Song’s imagery made explicit; what the Song pictures in human marriage, Hosea makes plain in divine-human terms.
- **Ephesians 5:25–32** — Paul’s use of marriage as a typological pointer to Christ and the Church, grounding the “one flesh” reality of Genesis 2 in the gospel; gives canonical warrant for reading the Song’s covenantal love imagery as pointing forward to Christ’s own self-giving, desiring love for His bride.
- **Revelation 19:6–9; 21:2** — The eschatological marriage of the Lamb — the final consummation of the covenant love the Song images; the Shulamite’s invitation in 7:11–13 (“come, my beloved... I will give you my love”) finds its ultimate fulfillment in the Bride’s readiness for her Lord.

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**Aim:** To awaken readers and hearers to the holiness and fullness of covenant love — in marriage as God designs it, and in the believer’s union with Christ — by showing that to be completely known and wholly desired is not a human fantasy but a gospel reality.

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## Content Table

| Verse(s) | Content                                                                                                                                                                | Notes                                                                                                                                                                   |
|----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 7:1      | Beloved opens the <i>waṣf</i> with admiration of her feet and legs — sandaled feet called “beautiful,” thighs compared to “jewels” and the work of a craftsman’s hands | First <i>waṣf</i> to begin at the feet and ascend; the sandals may indicate a dance setting (cf. 6:13); “craftsman’s hands” — her beauty is not accidental but designed |
| 7:2      | Navel compared to a rounded bowl never lacking blended wine; belly to a heap of wheat encircled with lilies                                                            | Rich agricultural and festive imagery; wholeness and abundance; intimate beauty celebrated without shame                                                                |
| 7:3      | Breasts compared to two fawns, twins of a gazelle                                                                                                                      | Identical to 4:5 — the recurrence emphasizes constancy of his admiration; love’s gaze does not tire                                                                     |
| 7:4      | Neck like a tower of ivory; eyes like pools in Heshbon; nose like a tower of Lebanon facing Damascus                                                                   | Architecture and geography used to express strength, depth, and commanding beauty; not comic hyperbole but cultural honor-speech                                        |
| 7:5      | Head like Carmel; hair like royal purple; the king is held captive by its tresses                                                                                      | The ascent from feet to head is complete; Carmel — lush, majestic, visible from                                                                                         |

| Verse(s) | Content                                                                                                                                                     | Notes                                                                                                                                                      |
|----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|          |                                                                                                                                                             | distance; “held captive” — love as the willing surrender of the strongest                                                                                  |
| 7:6      | Beloved exclaims her loveliness and delightfulness directly — “how beautiful and pleasant you are, O loved one, with all your delights!”                    | Moves from image-catalog to direct address; the <i>waṣf</i> becomes an exclamation; beauty seen leads to beauty declared                                   |
| 7:7–8a   | Her stature compared to a palm tree; her breasts to clusters of fruit; the Beloved declares his intention to climb the palm tree and take hold of its fruit | The imagery is explicitly anticipatory of intimate union; the palm tree was prized for its fruit — fullness and sweetness in view                          |
| 7:8b–9a  | He anticipates the fragrance of her breath like apples, her mouth like the best wine                                                                        | Sensory fullness — sight, touch, scent, taste; the whole person is known and desired                                                                       |
| 7:9b     | The Shulamite takes the line mid-verse: “going down smoothly for my beloved, gliding over lips and teeth”                                                   | She completes his sentence — the most intimate literary union in the book; two voices become one before a word of consent is spoken                        |
| 7:10     | “I am my beloved’s, and his desire is for me”                                                                                                               | The theological climax of the book’s <i>leitmotif</i> ; reversal of Gen. 3:16; her confidence is grounded in <i>his</i> desire, not in her own performance |
| 7:11     | She issues the invitation: “Come, my beloved, let us go into the country; let us spend the night in the villages”                                           | She leads; she invites; the redeemed relationship is reciprocal and confident — no                                                                         |

| Verse(s) | Content                                                                                     | Notes                                                                                                                                                |
|----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 7:12     | “Let us go early to the vineyards... there I will give you my love”                         | passivity or fear<br>Gift language — her love is not extracted but freely given; the setting is the vineyard of 1:6 and 2:15 — now fully flourishing |
| 7:13     | Mandrakes give fragrance; over their doors are all choice fruits, new and old, kept for him | Abundance and intentionality — she has been saving the best for him; love hoards nothing but reserves everything for the beloved                     |

## Divisions Table

| Division | Verses  | Label                                                  |
|----------|---------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| 1        | 7:1–5   | The Complete <i>Waṣf</i> — He Sees Her Wholly          |
| 2        | 7:6–9   | From Vision to Voice to Approach — He Moves Toward Her |
| 3        | 7:10    | The Theological Pivot — His Desire Is for Me           |
| 4        | 7:11–13 | The Confident Invitation — She Leads Him Into Fullness |

## Subject Sentence & Primary Claim (*restated*)

**Subject Sentence:** Covenant love sees fully, desires completely, and is received with confident joy.

**Primary Claim:** God is demonstrating through the fullness of mutual, rejoicing, covenant love that the distortions of the Fall are overturned in the relationship He designs — and that His own people are known and desired by Him with this same extravagant, specific, rejoicing love.

## Applications (Five)

**1. Receive the knowledge that God’s desire is specifically and personally for you.**

(*Affections/Worship*) The Shulamite’s confidence in 7:10 is not self-generated — it is grounded entirely in the fact that *his* desire is for *her*. The reader who struggles to believe they are truly wanted — by a spouse, by a community, ultimately by God — needs to hear

this: covenant love is not indifferent or general. It is specific and ascending. The *wasf* does not say “you are beautiful in general”; it names the feet, the thighs, the eyes, the hair. The God who made you knows you in that same particularity and declares you beautiful. Stop manufacturing confidence from within. Receive it from the One whose desire for you preceded your own desire for Him.

**2. Examine whether your understanding of embodied, marital love is shaped more by the culture’s distortions than by God’s design.** (*Mind/Belief*) The church has historically struggled to know what to do with this chapter — either over-spiritualizing it into irrelevance or treating it as slightly embarrassing. Both responses signal a failure to receive what God is actually doing here. Song 7 is in the canon because God intends His people to understand that physical, embodied, rejoicing marital love is *holy* — not a concession to weakness, not merely permitted, but celebrated and commanded. If a married believer feels that the love depicted in Song 7 is somehow too earthy, too specific, too physical to be spiritual, their thinking needs reformation by the text. The plain thing is the main thing: God made bodies, God made desire, and God called it very good.

**3. Where the Fall has distorted your experience of love and desire — through past sin, betrayal, or shame — bring those distortions before the gospel’s reversing power.** (*Affections/Worship*) Genesis 3:16 is not just an ancient pronouncement — it describes a wound that every person carries in their experience of love: desire distorted, trust broken, vulnerability weaponized. Song 7:10 is not just a poetic line — it is a declaration that the Redeemer’s desire for His people runs precisely in the opposite direction of the curse. For the person who has known love primarily as something taken from them rather than given to them, the Shulamite’s confident declaration is medicine. The One whose desire is for you will not distort, exploit, or abandon. Bring your Genesis 3:16 wounds to the Song 7:10 gospel.

**4. Pursue your spouse with the specific, ascending, unhurried attention that the Beloved models in this passage.** (*Will/Behavior*) The *wasf* is not rushed. It does not go directly to the destination. It begins at the feet and moves deliberately, seeing everything, naming everything, honoring everything along the way. The Beloved is not pursuing an experience — he is pursuing *her*, all of her, from the ground up. Married believers should ask honestly: when did I last pursue my spouse with this quality of unhurried, specific, attentive, verbal love? Not efficient affection. Not transactional intimacy. The deliberate, ascending gaze of someone who has decided that this person deserves to be fully seen and fully said. Go and do likewise.

**5. Identify the fear or passivity that keeps you from issuing the kind of confident invitation the Shulamite models in 7:11–13.** (*Will/Behavior*) The Shulamite does not wait to be pursued in this section — she leads. She invites. She has prepared. She says, *come, I have kept the best for you*. Many believers — in marriage and in their relationship with God — live in a posture of either anxious waiting or passive reception, never issuing the bold invitation that confident, reciprocal love produces. The question for the married believer is whether fear, past hurt, or low-grade despair has taken the invitation out of their hands.

The question for the believer in their walk with God is whether they have settled for receiving grace at a distance rather than running toward the one whose desire is already for them.

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## Theological Importance

**Theological Importance:** Song of Solomon 7 makes a claim that is structurally necessary for a complete biblical theology: that embodied, human, covenant love is not a lower-order good to be tolerated until heaven, but is itself a theological statement about God's design, His character, and the restoration He accomplishes. The *wasf* form — in which the beloved is seen completely and named specifically — encodes a doctrine of particularity: love, as God designs it, is not general admiration but precise knowing. The theological pivot in 7:10 reveals that the book's deepest concern is with the direction and grounding of desire: the Shulamite's confidence rests entirely on *his* desire for *her*, not on her own performance or achievement. This mirrors the structure of all covenant grace — the covenant is initiated and sustained by God's desire for His people, not by their qualifying for it. And the garden imagery of 7:11–13 situates redeemed love within the framework of Eden restored: what was broken in Genesis 3 is here pictured as flourishing again, not in a disembodied future but in the present reality of covenant life together.

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## Reformed Theological Significance

**Reformed Theological Significance:** From a Reformed perspective, Song of Solomon 7 is a crucial witness to the goodness of creation and the comprehensiveness of redemption. Against any residual Gnosticism or Platonic spirituality that treats the body as less real than the soul and physical love as less holy than spiritual devotion, this chapter insists on the full sanctification of embodied covenant life. The Reformed doctrine of creation — *everything God made is good, and redemption restores rather than replaces creation's goodness* — is on full display. Furthermore, the intertextual reversal of Genesis 3:16 in 7:10 is a textbook instance of redemptive-historical hermeneutics: the Fall's specific distortion (disordered desire, fractured covenant relationship) is addressed by a specific act of restoration (redeemed desire, confident covenant reciprocity). The Song does not merely comfort — it *reverses* the curse in narrative form. And because the Song functions typologically within the canon (Hosea, Ephesians 5, Revelation 19 all confirm this), Song 7's picture of lavish, specific, desiring covenant love becomes a window into the character of Christ Himself — who pursued His Bride from the bottom up, who desires her with an intensity that drove Him to the cross, and whose covenant faithfulness grounds her confidence with the same structure as 7:10: *his desire is for me*.

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## Main Takeaway

You are not loved in general. You are known specifically — from the ground up — and desired completely. The distortion of Genesis 3 told you that desire corrupts and that love exploits; Song of Solomon 7 tells you that the Redeemer's desire runs the other direction. Receive it. And then, whether in your marriage or in your walk with God, stop waiting at a distance — go into the vineyard, bring your best, and issue the invitation that confident covenant love makes possible.

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## Preaching/Teaching Pitfalls

- **Over-spiritualizing into irrelevance.** The most persistent pitfall in preaching Song 7 is bypassing the literal meaning so quickly that the text never actually lands. Preachers who jump immediately from the *waṣf* to “this is really about Christ and the Church” implicitly communicate that the physical content is embarrassing and needs to be escaped. This is a failure of nerve and a failure of theology. The literal must be honored first — the goodness of embodied marital love must be said plainly — before the typological layer can carry its full weight. The allegorical gets its power from the literal, not in place of it.
- **Avoiding the body by staying in the abstract.** Related to the above: preachers who acknowledge that the passage is “about marriage” but then speak only in general terms about “covenant love” and “intimacy” without ever naming what the text actually names have allowed cultural squeamishness to override the text's own explicitness. The *waṣf* is detailed and ascending. The sermon or teaching that refuses to be specific where the text is specific has not preached Song 7 — it has preached around it.
- **Missing the Genesis 3:16 reversal in 7:10.** Verse 10 is the theological climax of the chapter and arguably of the whole book. Preaching it as merely another statement of mutual belonging (“they're devoted to each other”) misses the intertextual load it carries. The word *teshuqah* (desire) appears in only three places in the Hebrew Bible: Genesis 3:16, Genesis 4:7, and Song 7:10. In Genesis 3 and 4 it carries connotations of distorted, potentially dominating desire — the Fall's wound. In Song 7:10 it is the Beloved's desire for his bride — the wound reversed. Preaching that misses this loses the passage's deepest claim.
- **Preaching only to married people.** The passage applies immediately and concretely to marriage, but the canonical and typological dimensions mean it speaks to every believer. Single believers need to hear that their longing for this quality of knowing and being known is not a deficiency — it points to the One whose desire for them is already operative. Reducing the application to “here's advice for your marriage” leaves the majority of the text's weight undelivered.

- **Moralizing the Shulamite's invitation.** The Shulamite leads and invites in 7:11–13 — but this must not be preached as a behavioral directive (“wives, be more sexually available”) without first grounding it in the theological foundation of 7:10. She invites *because* she is confident in his desire for her. Reverse the order and you have legalism. Preserve the order and you have gospel-motivated flourishing. Application to marital behavior must follow, not precede, the grounding in the security of covenant love.
- **Neglecting the eschatological horizon.** Song 7 ends with abundance, fragrance, and the promise of gifts kept for the beloved alone. This imagery is not exhausted in any present human marriage — it strains forward toward the consummation that Revelation 19 and 21 describe. Preaching that closes without at least gesturing toward the eschatological fulfillment of this love misses the canonical resonance that the Song itself invites. The best things are being kept; the full harvest is coming; the marriage supper of the Lamb is the final context in which Song 7 fully makes sense.