



The Shepherd's Shadow, SOS 2:3; David's Metaphor: "In the Shadow of Your Wings"; Dining Out: Banner of Love: Dando-Collins's Caesar's Legion, 2:4

- 48- In verse 3, the Shulammite is the apple while the Shepherd is the apple tree. She next describes how she and the Shepherd first met.

SOS 2:3 b - [SW] "In his shadow I took great delight and sat down, and his fruit was sweet to my lips."

1. The metaphor here reveals willing submission to the Shepherd as her right man. First of all she mentions sitting down under his shadow, personified as an "apple tree." "Shadow" is used figuratively in Scripture for divine protection and defense of believers.
2. This idea is found in four of the Davidic Psalms that describe the safety God provides to those who rely upon His trustworthiness under pressure. The phrase "in the shadow of Your wings" is common to all four, the first in:

Psalms 17:8 - Keep me as the apple of Your eye [the most precious of the senses and thus the most protected]; hide me in the shadow of Your wings.

- 1) David's integrity has been challenged and in this Psalm he appeals to the justice of God to vindicate Him from these false accusations. A part of his appeal is a petition for divine protection under the "shadow" of God's "wings."
- 2) In the next Psalm David contrasts the lives of those who are alienated from God with those who are in fellowship with Him. He addresses the latter in:

Psalms 36:7 - How precious is Your lovingkindness, O God! And the children of men take refuge in the shadow of Your wings.

- 3) The idiom is used by David in Psalm 57 as a doctrinal rationale in the midst of momentum testing while fleeing from King Saul.
- 4) The setting for this Psalm is in a cave at Engedi where David cut off a swath of Saul's coat to demonstrate that he could have easily taken the king's life but chose not to do so. The lyric calls for divine mercy in the midst of danger:

Psalms 57:1 - Be gracious to me, O God, be gracious to me, for my soul takes refuge in You; and in the shadow of Your wings I will take refuge until destruction passes by.

- 5) The final verse that contains the idiom is found in Psalm 63 which was written by David during the Absalom-Ahithophel Revolution. When David and his loyalists evacuated Jerusalem they marched due east into the Judean Wilderness just north of the Dead Sea. This was David's literal and figurative *Jornada*.
- 6) It was here that David was warned to continue across the Jordan River and having done so took refuge in the city of Mahanaim \מִנַּיִם -ha-nayim\'. It is here that he wrote:

Psalms 63:7 - You have been my help, and in the shadow of Your wings I sing for joy.

- 7) The word "shadow" is שֵׁל *sēl* (sē le) and refers to the protection provided by God illustrated by the object of the prepositional phrase, "of Your wings": כַּנָּפַי *kanap*.
- 8) This phrase describes the sacrificial act of the mother fowl when under the cover of her wings she protects her young chicks in times of danger, a phenomenon described by:



Radmacher, Earl D. (gen. ed.). *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Commentary*. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999), 689:

The Shadow of God's Wings. One of David's favorite symbolic expressions was the word-picture of sitting in the shadow of God's wings (Psalm 63:7; compare 17:8; 36:7; 57:1; 61:4 ["... the shelter of Your wings]; and 91:4 ["... under His wings you may seek refuge."]. The wings of a bird were a symbol of protection, defense, and refuge. For example, faced with a forest or range fire, a mother grouse or prairie chicken would gather her chicks together under her wings, settle down, and let the flames sweep over her. If necessary, she would die in order to save them. After the fire, the chicks would crawl out from under their mother's burnt body. They enjoyed life and safety because of her sacrificial devotion.

In a similar way, David was shielded from numerous attempts on his life, especially by King Saul and later by his own son Absalom. David knew by experience what it meant to have nothing standing between him and death but the gracious protection of God.

The Lord still offers the same refuge and protection today. For one thing, having voluntarily died on the Cross for our sins, He can deliver us from the penalty of sin (Romans 5:6-10). Furthermore, He watches over His children with diligent care (Hebrews 13:5-6; 1 Peter 5:7). Thus we can rely on a God who loves us and acts on our behalf when we cannot help ourselves.

- 9) This "word-picture" was utilized by Ron Block as the subject of his song, "In the Shadow of Your Wings," which is the title track for the Forbes Family CD released in 1996 (Rebel Records, #1733):

"In the Shadow of Your Wings"
© Ron Block (Moonlight Canyon Publishing-BMI)

Not a sparrow can fall from the heavens
If You won't allow it to be;
No man can fall from Your favor
If a man puts his trust in the One he can't see.

Oh I want to fly like a sparrow
Who fears not the days yet to come
And sings in the shadow of Your wings.

A sparrow won't try to deserve You,
He'll trust You to feed him again.
No man can gain Your approval
But by faith in the One who washed away my sins.

Oh I want to fly like a sparrow
Who fears not the wrath from Your hand;
He sings in the shadow of Your wings.

I want to walk in the shadow of Your wings.
I want to know You know what is best.
And when troubles come I'll be singing still,
"Let me rest in the shadow of Your wings."

3. This is how the Shulammite views her right man. His protection is symbolized by the shadow of the apple tree that provides for her a zone of protection from the dangers of the world, presently King Solomon.
4. She is protected by the Shepherd's shadow and is thus relaxed, confident, and tranquil while he stands tall, alert, and ready to defend her from danger.
5. She then recalls one of their romantic moments when they were able to kiss and to her his lips were sweet as fruit.
6. On this same occasion she is reminded of how he was the consummate gentleman, constantly providing her with a zone of comfort and safety in his presence.



SOS 2:4 - [SW] “He brought me to the banquet house, and his banner over me was love.”

1. In this verse she recalls a social occasion where the Shepherd took her dining. The location is called a “banquet house” which is not bad but not quite right.
2. The words in the Hebrew are **בַּיִת יַיִן** *bayith yayin*, precisely translated “house of wine,” and refers to a place where they dined out. A modern-day illustration would be a restaurant with a quality wine cellar.
3. It is on this occasion that the Shepherd most likely proposed to the Shulammitte. Her next comment is that “his banner over me was love.”
4. The word for “banner” is **דֶּגֶל** *degel* and is a military term referring to the standards that identify units on the battlefield.
5. This banner is the guidon to which military personnel rally in combat so that they are not separated from their units. These standards are revered by those of its unit and all who serve under it are motivated by the traditions associated with it in their nation’s military history.
6. The northern advance of the Roman Empire into England was facilitated by the courage in battle of the standard-bearer of Caesar’s 10th Legion:

Dando-Collins, Stephen. *Caesar's Legion: The Epic Saga of Julius Caesar's Elite Tenth Legion and the Armies of Rome*. (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2002), 32-34:

The landing site was a long, flat beach (of) present-day Deal \dēl\ [city in Kent County, southeastern England, on the Strait of Dover]. The Britons reached it first. As the landing ships of the fleet came up, cavalry and chariots were galloping along the sands, the warriors waving their javelins and challenging the invaders. Others dismounted and came a little way into the water, shaking their javelins and large rectangular shields and yelling insults. The nobles were better clothed and equipped. The rank and file were generally lithe little men with mustaches but not beards, and stripped to the waist with their faces and torsos decorated with blue woad designs. (pp. 32-33)

Caesar gave the order for the landing to go ahead, and the transports slid into the shallows and grounded. But because of their draft and heavy loads, the craft were still in relatively deep water. Spanish legionaries going over the sides fully armed with shields and javelins would find themselves up to their chests in water, even up to their necks in some cases, and they didn't like the idea at all. One stumble and they would be fish feed. There were a lot of heads shaking along the low rails of the transports.

Seeing this, Caesar signaled the warships of the escort to also run aground, farther down the beach on the Briton's right flank, from where they could cover the landing with their artillery and the auxiliary archers carried by several cruisers. Without hesitation, the masters of the warships obeyed—the cruisers and frigates slid into shore with their oars raking the surf, and ejecting volleys of arrows.

On the sand, the Britons, who had never seen ships powered by banks of oars before, lost their initial bravado and drew back out of range. This was the moment Caesar had been waiting for, and he gave the order for the legionaries of the 7th and the 10th (legions) to go over the side. But still the troops hesitated, looking at the deep water beside them and the rolling surf that could knock them off their feet.

It was now that the *aquilifer* \a-kwi' li-fer\ [the standard-bearer who carried the legion's eagle] of the 10th Legion, the bearer of its eagle standard, took the step that was to immortalize him, although his name has not come down to us. No more than twenty-seven years of age, he probably first uttered the Legionary's Prayer: “Jupiter Greatest and Best, protect this legion, soldiers all,” and adding, according to Caesar, “May my act bring good luck to us all.” Then he went over the side with the eagle of the 10th.



"Jump in, boys!" he called to his comrades, holding the standard high, "unless you want to surrender our eagle to the enemy. I, for one, intend doing my duty by my homeland and by my general." (p. 33)

The men of the 10th on ships all around him gaped in horror as the *aquilifer* bore their eagle toward the beach. The eagle of the legion, silver at this time, gold by imperial times, was venerated by its legionaries. Kept at an altar in camp with lamps burning throughout the night, it and the ground it stood on were considered sacred. Conveyance and protection of the eagle were the tasks of the men of the 1st Cohort, but it was the obligation of every soldier in the legion to defend it with his life. Roman generals were feted as national heroes for retrieving eagles wrested from legions by the enemy. But the loss itself was never forgotten. It was the greatest dishonor a legion could suffer to have its eagle taken in battle, a stain on the reputation of legion and legionary alike that never went away. (pp. 33-34)

Well did the men of the 10th know there were many instances in Roman history of eagle-bearers and legionaries and centurions giving their lives to save their eagle. And here was this idiot about to make a gift of the eagle of the 10th to the barbarian British! With a roar, affronted men of the 10th went over the side and then splashed through the water, following their crazy-brave eagle-bearer and their hallowed eagle through the surf toward the waiting Britons. Not to be outdone, on seeing the 10th proceeding to land, the men of the 7th Legion went over the side as well. (p. 34)

7. From this we learn that the standard or the *aquila* \a' kwi-la\ is the rallying point for a legion and metaphorically it carries the idea of a place where one can reorient to a pressure situation, find renewed strength, and protection.