

Song of Solomon 1:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The beams of our house are cedar, and our rafters of fir.

Analysis

The beams of our house are cedar, and our rafters of fir. This concluding verse of chapter 1 describes the royal bedchamber using architectural imagery. The Hebrew qorot batenu arazim rachitenu berotim (קָרוֹת בָּתֵּנוּ אֲרַזִּים רְחִיטֵנוּ בְּרוֹתִים) employs Lebanon's most prized building materials—cedar and fir. Qorot (קָרוֹת) refers to supporting beams or rafters; rachit (רְחִיט) means paneling or ceiling boards. Together they represent structural stability and luxurious beauty.

Cedar (erez, אֶרֶץ) from Lebanon symbolized permanence, incorruptibility, and royal splendor throughout Scripture. Solomon's temple used cedar extensively (1 Kings 6:9-18), as did his palace (1 Kings 7:2-3). Fir or cypress (berosh, בְּרוֹשׁ) complemented cedar's durability with fragrant beauty. The imagery suggests that love between bride and bridegroom creates an enduring sanctuary—their relationship is the true "house," more precious than physical structures. This anticipates Ephesians 2:19-22 where believers become God's dwelling place, built on Christ the cornerstone.

Allegorically, interpreters see Christ and His church: the beams represent foundational doctrines supporting the household of faith, built on apostolic teaching (Ephesians 2:20). The cedar's incorruptibility points to Christ's eternal nature and resurrection body. The intimate "our house" reflects covenant union—Christ dwells with His bride (Revelation 21:3). The lovers' retreat into natural shelter of trees (1:16) now becomes permanent dwelling, suggesting progression from courtship to covenant, nature to civilization, temporary to eternal.

Historical Context

Written during Solomon's reign (970-930 BC), the Song celebrates royal marriage using imagery familiar to ancient Israel. Cedar and fir from Lebanon (modern-day Lebanon) were expensive imports requiring significant resources to obtain. Phoenician traders controlled this lumber trade, supplying Egyptian pharaohs and Mesopotamian kings. Solomon's construction projects consumed vast quantities of Lebanese timber (1 Kings 5:6-10), so original audience would immediately recognize this as royal luxury. The verse may reference actual palatial chambers or poetically transform natural outdoor setting (trees in 1:16) into metaphorical "house." Either way, it establishes security and permanence in their relationship.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How does the imagery of cedar and fir—durable, fragrant, incorruptible—point toward the eternal, unchanging nature of Christ's love for His church?
2. In what ways does viewing our relationship with Christ as an intimate dwelling place ("our house") deepen understanding of covenant union?
3. What does the progression from natural shelter (1:16) to permanent dwelling (1:17) teach about spiritual maturity and stability in Christ?

Interlinear Text

בָּרוּתִים: בְּחִיטֵּנוּ אֶבֶן יִמְשָׁלֵךְ וְתַּחֲלֵת יְנֵנוּ קָרֵר וְתַּ

The beams of our house are cedar and our rafters of fir

H6982

H1004

H730

H7351

H1266

Additional Cross-References

Hebrews 11:10: For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

Psalms 92:12: The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.

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