

## FLOWER METAPHORS IN THE SCRIPTURES

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### Abstract

This research aims to identify and analyze the flowers used as metaphors in the Scriptures and their implications. The data are gathered from the Scriptures itself (King James Version) and from other sources on the flowers' characteristics and qualities. The data are analyzed using theory of morphology, semantics, and pragmatics approach. The result shows that there are three kinds of flowers are used as metaphors in the Scriptures, that is: rose of Sharon, lily of the valley in Song of Solomon 2:1 and an anonymous flower in Isaiah 28:1. The rose of Sharon and lily of the valley implies sacrifice and humility, and the anonymous flower implies destruction or death.

**Keywords:** flower metaphor, rose of Sharon, lily of the valley, Scriptures

### INTRODUCTION

Flowers, a beautiful and fragrant object has a strong attraction for all mankind from the ancient time until today. Flowers have always been the objects of beauty. Poets of every age have praised them. Roses, tulips, carnations, orchids are cultivated for their showy flowers. Experts are constantly trying to improve nature by making the flowers bigger, more striking and more fragrant (The Book of Popular Science,1977). Flowers are present in human life in many ways. People use flowers for communication – expressing feeling-, medicines, and beauty products. A few nations have floral emblems such as chrysanthemum and cherry blossom for Japan, lily of the valley for Finland and Yugoslavia, tulips for Holland, Hungary and Turkey, and so forth. (Encyclopedia Americana,1990). During the coronavirus pandemic, Lewis Miller, a New York Floral Designer found that people are starved for beauty, and flowers are nature's biggest show-offs; they are mood elevators and stress relievers. Phil John Perry, a famous florist in UK says, "Florals mark our most profound moments in life". And a photographer in Japan, Yoshiyuki Okuyama finds flowers to be a symbol of life, love, and lost opportunity with his grandmother. (Taylor, 2020. )

Flowers have meaning for human life, for aesthetic purposes, spiritual concepts, conveying human feelings and emotions, and health. People are used to looking for the meaning of life from experiences, contemplations, reading literacy that contains moral teaching like books, holy books, literary works, as well as from audio visuals like films, songs, drama, and from other media. For the Christians, the Scriptures or Bible is the source of the meaning and purpose of life because the Scriptures is the true knowledge of God and the living guidelines. The proper understanding of the Scripture is necessary because by knowing the meaning and purpose of life, people can live life more easily and wiser. When they are in times of hardship and challenges, it will be easier for them to get through it all as long as they hold on fast to the source of the meaning of life. Besides, the

Scriptures is God-breathed and it is profitable for helping Christians mature and better obey God (2 Timothy 3:16).

Some reasons motivated the writers of this paper to study about flower metaphors in the Scriptures are due to first, the influence of the writers' friends, family, and church when decorating flowers for altars and for Christmas at home. The writers are interested in the beauty of flowers started when they were still young by becoming the member of a flower shop organization and involving in the family ritual from Bali that uses flowers in carrying out prayers. In communicating with family and friends, the writers often use flowers, especially on important events. Secondly, the writers' curiosity to dig out what flowers are used as metaphors in the Scriptures and what their implications for the readers.

The Scriptures consists of more than 60 books and written by more than 40 authors with various genres and literary style, such as historical narrative, poetry, wisdom, law, prophecy, gospels, and epistles. To produce a rhetorical or achieve a special effect, some authors use figures of speech in that they are used to clarify meaning, to provide vivid examples, to emphasize, to stimulate associations and emotions, to give life to inanimate objects, to amuse, or to ornament. But the most important is the figures of speech have an essential aesthetic purpose, widening the range of perception and response to the world of objects and ideas" (Encyclopedia Americana, 1990). The personification style can be found in the Book of Psalms, hyperbole in the Gospel of Luke, allegory in the Gospel of John and Gospel of Ephesians, metaphors and simile in the Book of Proverbs, Book of Isaiah, Gospel of Matthew, and Gospel of John. In fact, some Books in the Old Testament like the Book of Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Songs of Solomon use the poetic writing style. This kind of writing requires a certain language approach to interpret or understand the meaning of the verses.

Metaphor is a figure of speech that, presupposing a similarity of two or more things, denotes one of them by terms properly or literally signifying the other, as if they were identical; it makes the comparison by saying that something is something else. Metaphors are used by the speakers or writers, spontaneously or artfully, with the purpose to make their meaning clear or forceful, to arouse emotion and inculcate attitudes, or to give pleasure" (Encyclopedia Americana, 1990).

Metaphor in the Scriptures is used to express meanings with the emphasis on the impression so as to make it easier for the readers to understand and absorb the messages of the verses. Pragmatically, the metaphors in the Scriptures have a function to define reality; it depicts the unseen realities of the spiritual realm using simple or familiar objects they lived with day by day, easily found around, not the extravaganzas. Simple means the size is not big, delicate, sweet and beautiful, natural, visual, alive, and growing. Since the majority of the people who lived during the Scriptures writing were farmers, the objects used for metaphors were things that had become the part of their lives and easily to find, namely those related to agriculture, animal husbandry, rivers, and lakes. Among the most familiar are plants like, flower, seeds, grass, wheat, and trees, and domestic

animals. Using simple objects can help the readers to understand easier the meaning of the verses for those objects were perceptible and familiar to them.

In this study, the writers discuss about the flowers metaphor in the Scriptures using semantics, morphology, and pragmatics approaches. Few studies have been done which discuss about flower metaphor but they focus on different aspects and use different approaches. Some of others are an interesting topic entitled "Metafora dalam Kitab Amsal di Alkitab" by Melisa Engdyane Kalengkongan, Universitas Sam Ratulangi. Manado. 2017) which identifies and analyzes metaphors in the Book of Songs of Solomon using Lakoff and Johnson theory. Other study entitled "Metafora tentang Tuhan dalam Kitab Mazmur", by Sony Christian Sudarsono, aims to describe the metaphors about God in the Book of Psalms and interpret why the metaphors are used using anthropological cognitive and linguistic approach. This study contributes valuable knowledge to the writers of this paper on functions of metaphor and the terms of *tenor* and *vehicle* as well.

The Scriptures verses about flowers are analogies or symbolisms to help the readers understand the textual concept of the Scriptures. It uses these analogies to communicate and help the readers understand the message. The term flower in the Scriptures is mentioned 159 times. There are five flowers employed in the Scriptures: rose, rose of Sharon, lily, lily of the valley, and grass flowers. These flowers imply love, the glory of God, blessings, hope, humility, courage, and transience, etc. Flowers are used to describe God's truly extraordinary love and teachings as well as to remind human about fragility that the beauty of a flower fades away and eventually dies. Only the love of God is eternal.

## **METHOD**

### **Method of Data Collection**

Primary data are collected from the Scriptures (King James Version). The first step to take is to identify the names of the flowers used in the Scriptures, after which sort out the verses use flowers metaphor, both flowers that have proper names and the anonymous one. There are three flowers used as metaphors namely rose of Sharon and lily of the valleys in the Book of Songs of Solomon 2:1 and an anonymous flower in the Book of Isaiah 28:1. Secondary data are taken from library research by reading books, articles, and encyclopaedias both printed and online and watching videos,

### **Method of Data Analysis**

The data gathered then are analyzed using the theories mentioned in the Theoretical Framework below: semantics, morphology, and pragmatics. The theory of semantics is used to analyze the lexical meaning of the flower, the theory of morphology is used to analyze the word formation of the name of the flower, and the pragmatic approach is used to analyze the metaphor by finding the similarities between the two terms or contexts in the verses and explaining what they imply.

## Theoretical Framework

Several linguistic theoretical approaches are used in discussing the meaning of flowers.

### Morphology

Morphology is the branch of linguistics that studies word formation. In exploring flowers, Morphology is used to describe and understand flowers including origin, habitat, history, mythology and specifications.

### Semantics

Semantics is a branch of linguistics that studies meaning. According to Leech (1981), semantics is “a branch of linguistics that studies the meaning of words in languages.” (p.1-8) So, meaning is the field of study discussed in semantic science. This statement is emphasized also by Hurford and Heasley which state that “SEMANTICS is the study of MEANING IN LANGUAGE.” (Hurford&Heasley,1983, p.1) Therefore, basically semantics is a branch of linguistics which studies meaning in languages.

### Pragmatics

Pragmatics is the branch of linguistics that studies language and its function in life. Levinson defines that pragmatics is “the study of language use, that is the study of relation between language and context which is basic to an account of language understanding which involves the making of inferences which will connect what is said to what is mutually assumed or what has been said before” (Levinson, 1983, p.5). Lakoff and Johnson (2003) define metaphors as “understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another.” (p.5). It is a kind of indirect comparison which compares two concepts with similar characteristics.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

There are many names, attributes, and functions of flowers mentioned in the Scriptures. First, flowers grow in the fields (Psalm 103:15) and (Job 14:2). Second, flowers are nurtured in the garden (Song of Solomon 6:2). Third, flowers are described as beauty (Matthew 6:28-29), flowers with their sweet fragrance (Song of Solomon 5:13), withered flowers (Psalm 103:16) and Isaiah (40:8), those that appear during harvesting (Song of Solomon 2:12). Fourth, the flowers named after Lily (Hosea 14:6), Lily of the valley (Song of Solomon 2:1), rose of Sharon (Song of Solomon 2:1), rose (Isaiah 35:2), and grass (1 Peter 1:24). Fifth, flowers are used as wreaths in idolatry (Acts 14:13). Sixth, flowers are used as paintings on gold candlesticks (Exodus 25:31, 33; 2 Chronicles 4:21) and on wooden utensils in the Temple (1 Kings 6:18, 29, 32, 35), as well as on "the sea" (pool) of copper (1 Kings 7:26; 2 Chronicles 4:5). Lastly, flowers are used to describe all the graces of Christ (Song of Solomon

5:13), the shortness of human life (Job 14:2 and Psalm 103:15), the kingdom of Israel (Isaiah 28:1), human glory (1Peter 1:24), and the rich (James 1:10-11).

From the various names, attributes, and functions of flowers mentioned above, clearly seen that there are five flowers have proper names: rose, rose of Sharon, lily, lily of the valley, and grass flower; the rest are anonymous flowers. There are two flowers with proper names and an anonymous flower are used as metaphors in the Scriptures. Metaphor of rose of Sharon and lily of the valley is found in the Book of Song of Solomon 2:1 (“I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys.”) and a metaphor of an anonymous flower is found in Book of Isaiah 28:1 (“Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim, whose glorious beauty is a fading flower, which are on the head of the fat valleys of them that are overcome with wine!”).

## **Discussion**

The concept of God is an abstract concept that cannot be understood logically. Why is it said abstract? Because God is imperceptible; God cannot be seen, heard, felt, touched, and smelled. In biblical terms, God is called transcendent because His existence is far beyond human comprehension so it is hard to understand it using human thought or logic. It is not difficult to accept and justify when it is said that Mr. Joko Widodo is the president of the Republic of Indonesia. Everyone will accept this information or statement. Why? Because the existence of Mr. Jokowi is real, concrete, and can be proven by using the senses. We can see him, can hear his voice, and can communicate with him. However, it is different when it comes to God's existence as God cannot be sensed. God is invisible and his greatness is imperceivable by mankind. Many characters and authors in the Scriptures - who act as the messengers of God's voice to humans - are easier to accept and know God because His existence can be sensed by them. Only certain people were chosen to have gifts or opportunities to directly spoke or heard the voice of the transcendent God in several ways. Prophet Moses spoke with God on Mount Sinai, Prophet Abraham, Ezekiel, Nathan, and Isaiah heard the voice of God and also had visions through their dreams.

There are two verses that use flowers as metaphors will be discussed in this study. The first is rose of Sharon and lily of the valley used in Song of Solomon 2:1 which compares “I” (Jesus) with rose of Sharon and lily of the valleys. And another verse is an anonymous flower used in Isaiah 28:1 which compares the tribe of Ephraim or Israel (who were on the verge of destruction) with a fading flower.

## Rose of Sharon and lily of the valleys



Rose of Sharon  
(*Hibiscus syriacus*, or *Althaea syriaca*)



Lily of the valley  
(*Convallaria majalis*)

Morphologically, rose of Sharon is composed by combining the words: rose+of+Sharon. According to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, "rose" means a flower with a sweet smell (p. 1022) and "Sharon" is a name of a coastal plain in Israel So, "rose of Sharon" is a flower with a sweet smell grow on the coastal plain of Sharon; the name of this "Sharon" was taken from the name of the place it grew, a wide fertile coastal plain of Sharon (also spelled Saron). Semantically, Rose of Sharon, also called shrubby althaea, *Hibiscus syriacus*, or *Althaea syriaca*, is a shrub that grows 5 to 15 feet high. It bears broadly bell-shaped single or double flowers-red, purple, violet, or white- that are especially showy on cloudy days (Encyclopedia Americana, 1990). Rose of Sharon grows on a bush and it is draught tolerant. The blossoms and leaves are edible, contain vitamin C and antioxidants; it can be made for tea, salads, tincture, herbal floral vinegar. Rose of Sharon is medicinal. It can be used for burns wounds, inflammation sore throats, colds, helping lower high blood pressure (Pearson, 2022).

Morphologically, lily of the valley—or sometimes it is written as lily-of-the-valley—is composed by combining the words: lily+of+the+valley. According to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, lily of the valley is defined as "a plant with small white flowers shaped like bells." (2015) Lily of the valley is a low-growing perennial plant with nodding, fragrant white flowers sometimes used in bridal bouquets. The lily of the valley (*Convallaria majalis*) originally native to Europe. Its large broad leaves with the 5-8-inch-tall flower-bearing stem. Convallatoxin, a drug obtained from the plant, is a heart stimulant" (The Encyclopedia Americana International, 1998) the lily of the valley is a flower that is most often viewed as a symbol of rebirth and humility. It can also be used to symbolize chastity, purity, sweetness, and motherhood. In Germanic mythology, the flower was associated with the purity of the goddess Ostara, a virgin known for her humility. In Victorian times, the flower signified a return to happiness. Christian traditions maintain that the flower is a symbol of humility and of the second coming of Christ (Rebekah P., 2022).

The name of rose of Sharon and lily of the valleys are found in Book of Song of Solomon 2:1 that says, "I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys". Literally, this verse is an expression of King Solomon to his lover. Many refer this verse to Jesus as being a bridegroom and His church

or the believers as His bride. The sweet-smelling of the rose of Sharon and lily of the valleys symbolizes the 'sweet-smelling' of the saviour, Jesus Christ.

Many readers of the Book of Song of Solomon admit that this Book is one of the hardest to comprehend because beside it is rooted in an ancient context, it contains lots of figures of speech. To comprehend something abstract is not easy but using metaphors can help by employing a factual object. In understanding a metaphor, the readers are invited to be active to present an image in their minds. With the purpose to present an abstract object or thing in a real object. The real objects are things that are easy to find in everyday life. The activity of presenting the image is not challenging because the objects used in the metaphor are things which are familiar to the readers.

Pradopo (2005, as cited in Sudarsono, 2016) presented the meaning of a metaphor according to Bekker which says that metaphor is seeing something through another object. It consists of two terms or two parts: the main term called the *tenor* functions to be compared and the second term is called the *vehicle* which functions to compare (. By borrowing the terms *tenor* and *vehicle*, the metaphor in Song of Solomon 2:1 – “I am the rose of Sharon and lily of the valley” – “I” (Jesus) is referred to as a tenor – a thing being compared, and “rose of Sharon and lily of the valleys” is called vehicle, - the thing that compares. There are similar semantic features between "I" and "rose of Sharon and lily of the valley."

“I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys.” Here, Jesus Christ is not literally rose of Sharon or lily of the valleys but the sense or aspects of “I” (Jesus) is transferred into rose of Sharon and lily of the valleys. It describes how sweet and beautiful Jesus Christ is as it is comparing to rose of Sharon and lily of the valley. Jesus Christ’s beauty and sweetness can be seen, felt, tasted through the images of rose of Sharon and lily of the valley. As the images of these flowers have been created in readers’ mind, at the same time they bring about the presence of the unseen, Jesus Christ. Something that previously seemed unachievable and beyond the reader’s mind has become something sensible and known – something transcendent becomes immanent. What knowing means here does not only knowing the facts about God, but allowing the facts about God to become one’s personal reality by doing the will of God in heaven (Matthew 7:21 – “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven”).

“I”, denotes Jesus Christ, is conceptual abstract and “rose of Sharon and lily of the valley” is conceptual concrete. The conceptual abstract is presented in or through the conceptual concrete. Through this metaphor, readers can see and taste the insensible or transcendent God in or through the image of the rose of Sharon and lily of the valleys in their mind. These two flowers become an intermediary or realm to get to know the personality of Jesus Christ who is beyond the readers' mind. Here, a comparison is made – looking for similarities – between Jesus and the two flowers.

The first similarity between “I” (Jesus) and “rose of Sharon and lily of the valleys” is having the quality of beauty. When people read or hear the word of “flower”, the first thing or idea that arises

on the reader's mind is "beautiful, sweet, fragrant" that gives enjoyment or pleasure. In the metaphor of "I am the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valleys", "I" (Jesus) and "the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valleys" are two complexly unrelated things. Yet the beauty of rose of Sharon and lily of the valleys is used in comparison to Jesus; His beauty in his light and glory is transferred to rose of Sharon and lily of the valleys. The Scriptures says that Jesus is beautiful in His light and glory (Revelation 4:3 "And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone; and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald"). The readers can perceive this beauty using the image of rose of Sharon and lily of the valleys which are delicate and have sweet fragrance.

What the beauty implies here is sacrifice or giving away. Jesus God gives joy to men for He is the source of joy (Psalm 43:4 "Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy: yea, upon the harp will I praise thee, O God my God"). The love, kindness, justice, wisdom, humility and all the goodness He gives become joy to men. The sweet-smell from the rose of Sharon and lily of the valleys give pleasures to men. Both parts (Jesus - the *tenor* and rose of Sharon and lily of the valleys – the *vehicle*) in the metaphor of "I am the rose of Sharon and lily of the valleys" surrender and share their possessions freely to men. Jesus sacrificed his life to save men from eternal death meanwhile the beauty and sweet fragrance of the rose of Sharon and lily of the valleys are not celebrated by themselves, but men; men enjoy their beauty, smell their sweet fragrance which arouses pleasures, and taste their sweetness. Their beauty spreads around, gives away all they have worked on during the growing time, started from the seeds until they produce sweet scent.

The healing power of Jesus Christ (Psalm 103:2-3: 2Bless the Lord. O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: 3Who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases.") resembles the rose of Sharon's and lily of the valleys'. These flowers are used for curing many illnesses. The readers are helped to perceive or comprehend the fact that Jesus has the healing power through the image of the Rose of Sharon and lily of the valleys which have power to heal sickness. Rose of Sharon is used for burns wounds, inflammation sore throats, colds, helping lower high blood pressure (Pearson, 2022) and lily of the valley is good for heart stimulant (The Encyclopedia Americana International Edition, 1998). The difference lies only on the healing technique; Jesus Himself heals the sickness otherwise rose of Sharon and lily of the valleys are made or formulated into medicines to heal sickness.

Rose of Sharon and lily of the valleys grow and live not for themselves but for others. Jesus was born and lived not for the sake of Himself but for men; he lived as a man only to make men live. Jesus provides foods for the body and soul. He fed 5000 people at the Sermon of the Mount (Matthew 14:13-21) and He turned the water into wine (John 2:1-11) and He gives Himself as the food of the soul as He said, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eats of this bread, he shall live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" (John 6:51). The petals of the rose of Sharon can be used for food and drinks, like



tea and smoothies, and salad. (Pearson, 2022). The joy given to men's soul by Jesus resembles the pleasures aroused from rose of Sharon and lily of the valleys

Through the verse "I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys", the author reminds the readers to keep giving and spreading their abundant blessings, the sweet and good things to others, as it is said in the Hebrews, "But do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased" (13:16).

Secondly, "I" resembles "the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys" in low position. "I" (Jesus), as the first or main term, depicts a low position. God came down from heaven, became a man, and took a low position. He is the owner of everything on earth and in heaven, however He did not consider it a necessary defended, but emptied it out and became the same as ordinary people (Philippians 2:5-7: " 5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: 7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men"). Rose of Sharon and lily of the valleys likewise denote low position seen through the place they grow, on the coastal plain and valleys in which the position of the land was lower than its surroundings; it is also shown in the lily of the valley's nodding white bell-shaped flowers.

The rose of the Sharon's and lily of the valleys' habitant pictured in the Song of Solomon 2:1 was on the plain and valleys. The position of the land was lower than its surroundings, yet rose of Sharon grew and spread out like a beautiful blanket. Its beauty evoked a sense of admiration and love so that Solomon brought it into his language style in his songs in transferring Jesus' low position to the image of both flowers. The habitant of the rose of Sharon is comparing to Jesus' low position in which He came down from heaven to earth, a king became a servant. The low position here implies humility.

Humility is "the quality of not thinking that you are better than other people" (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 2010). The Bible describes humility as meekness, lowliness, and absence of self. Jesus came down from heaven to earth only to serve men until the end of his life. From his birth to the end of his life, Jesus showed and practiced countless acts of humility. He was born and raised in a poor family and during his ministry He went around from place to place on foot instead of riding a horse or chariot, stayed in his followers' houses, ate simple food, and washed His disciples' feet. Jesus waited and started his public ministry at His thirty (Luke 3:23) not because He was not capable inteaching and preaching but because He respected the traditions among the Jews. By custom, rabbis were not regarded as mature enough to begin their public ministry until 30. Even at the end of his life, Jesus died on the cross among criminals and was buried in someone else's land. From the cradle to the grave, Jesus, the Son of God, taught and practiced humility.

Humility is mentioned fifty-four times in the Scriptures. This high frequency indicates that humility is necessary. This humility is a message for men to remain humble especially when success

and prosperity are right in their hands. Men should be humble before others and humble themselves before God for all the good things they have are the blessings from God and men have no reason to be boastful. Jesus repeatedly stated that it is the humble who will enter the kingdom. A humble person fears God, obeys His commands, and does not boast. If a man wants to go to a high place (Heaven) then what is needed to do is to stay low (Luke 14:11: "Whoever humbles himself will be exalted"). Among other verses about humility in the Scriptures are: "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time" (1 Peter 5:6:), and "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long suffering" (Colossians 3:12).

The figure of speech of flower metaphor in the Book of Song of Solomon 2:1 "I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys" helps the readers to understand the transcendence becomes immanence; it transfers the beyond mind-God to the image of the rose of Sharon and lily of the valleys in that so the readers may learn and grasp the messages from the existence of God, in this case the message of giving away and humility.

### **An Anonymous flower**

Flowers are known for their beauty and fragrance. However, the beauty of flowers will not last forever. In fact, the beauty of flowers only has a relatively short bloom period; their longest blooming-span is about one month. Flowers are widely used as objects of beauty, but flowers are also used to depict the end of happiness or glory and the verge of death.

In the Book of Isaiah, the author prophet Isaiah pictured the God's judgement, mercy, and faithfulness on the Ephraimites (Judah and Israel). The Ephraimites were enjoying the prosperity of living in the land God gave them. Instead of worshiping God, the Israel worshiped the gods of the Canaan and turned away from God. As a result, they were reprovved and threatened for their pride and drunkenness. Its people were proud but its leaders were drunks. Ephraim was like a beautiful flower, but its glory would die. Their land was rich with good crops but wine made its people drunken and fall over. Prophet Isaiah warned the Israel of the judgements that were coming upon them for their sins. The king of Assyria would destroy and carried the people into captivity and took all their land, there would be no more the glorious Israel if they did not repent, left their idolatry, and backed to worship God (Isaiah 28). This verse is a reminder to the Ephraim (as well as to the readers) to repent, otherwise the seed of Israel would be ceased from being a nation before God forever.

Pragmatically, the function of the language, in this case a metaphor, in Isaiah 28:1 is to influence the readers by using the *vehicle* which is familiar to them, that is flower – a fading flower. Using the image or the presence of the fading flower in the readers' mind the readers are asked or persuaded indirectly to leave their sins and turn back to God.

In picturing the condition of Ephraimites (if they did not repent), the author employed metaphor of an anonymous fading flower which says, "Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkards

of Ephraim, whose glorious beauty is a fading flower, which are on the head of the fat valleys of them that are overcome with wine!" (Isaiah 28:1). The fading flower (the *vehicle*) is used in comparison to the Ephraim's glorious beauty (the *tenor*). Here, the Ephraim's glory is transferred into the image of a fading flower. According Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, fade means "to behave in a way does not attract any attention" (2010). It can be said that a fading flower is a flower which is not attracting anymore because it is losing its beauty, freshness, vitality, and strength. Through the image of a fading flower with its weakening color, yellowish and brownish leaves covered with spots, and the withering petals, the readers can see on their mind the sad condition of the Ephraimites which was on the verge of destruction. They would lose their power and strength, some of them would die in the battle field to fight against the Assyrian, the remain would be taken into captivity and become slaves, children lost and separated from parents, all their belongings would be taken away. Nothing left but misery and grief. The Ephraimites would lose the glory which was used to be theirs.

The "ceasing of Israel" here implies death. Nothing lasts forever. All creatures on earth live here today but will be gone tomorrow, whether it is caused by the natural or the external factors. Likewise, flowers, which are known for their natural beauty and fragrance, will one day lose their fragrance and die. Flowers wither and die due to natural and external factors. Inadequate nutritional intake or the excessive sunlight will cause dryness to flowers which eventually will wither and die. Excessive rainfall or water can also cause flowers to spoil more quickly and rot and die. However, the flowers will also die because of its limited lifespan. The wealthy and famous people, skyscrapers, supersonic vehicles, all will crumble and fall eventually. The young and old, the rich and poor, the healthy and sick, will be gone someday. Even the Lord Jesus himself, being a human, had a life span of 33 years. He, after completing the mission of coming down from heaven save men from eternal death, finally died on the cross.

Through the "fading flower", the readers are reminded to stay on the God's way especially when living a prosperous life and to never forget or turn away from the source of life and blessing that is Jesus Christ, otherwise judgment will be done which will lead to death, physically or spiritually. Men still have to pay the price for the things they have done.

## CONCLUSION

God's messengers used the symbols of flowers with metaphorical meanings and explanations in the Scriptures, but some have understood them and some have not. By employing the metaphor of flowers, a familiar object to the readers, the readers of the Scriptures can better understand and at the same time absorb better the implication of the messages in the Scriptures; sacrifice and humility are implied by rose of Sharon and lily of the valleys, and death is implied by an anonymous fading flower.

The Scriptures teaches daily life according to the message of Jesus with symbols including the flower symbol. The flower symbol in the Scriptures means the message and advice of Jesus

Christ which we apply in our daily lives, thus the meaning in the Scriptures is the same in the metaphorical meaning of flowers.

Regarding the interpretation of the Scriptures, only certain people, namely the priests and the Bible theologians comprehend. However, the readers of the Scriptures are encouraged to understand the meaning and benefits of the metaphor of flowers in the Scriptures so that they can better appreciate the message from Jesus in the Scriptures and apply it in their daily life. This paper is hoped can mark out other writers a path to follow as they study other metaphors in the scriptures.

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