

Tending Love's Fire
Song of Songs 7:1 – 8:14

This is the fifth and final message in this series on the Song of Songs, also known as the Song of Solomon. I was very much impressed to learn that the Hebrew title can be read: “Of all the songs this is the Song!”

The **Song** is a drama with two soloists. The female voice is “the beloved” and the male voice is “the lover.” The transitions between the two soloists are sung by “the daughters of Jerusalem.”

An old Jewish man, in the course of a serious conversation with a Christian friend said, “The difference between the Jews and Christians is that we Jews believe in sex!”

Obviously the great difference between Jews and Christians is that Christians believe that Jesus of Nazareth is the promised Messiah and orthodox Jews still wait for His first coming. And too, the difference between orthodox Jews and the majority of Jews is that they are cultural Jews and most of them are atheists.

This charge about sex is largely true in that many Christians do think that there is something unholy about sex. What makes sex unholy is when it is practiced outside of the marriage union between one man and one woman!

Some Bible scholars avoid the Song and regard it as unfit for the Bible.

When God said, “The two shall become one flesh...” in the context of a scriptural marriage, He endorses sex as a good thing.

In Song married sex is not trivialized and there are no crude innuendos.

1. The Dance of the Beloved
a. Invitation to Dance: Song 6:13

Return, return, O Shulammitte,
return, return, that we may look upon you.
Why should you look upon the Shulammitte,
as upon a dance before two armies?

“Come back, come back, come back, come back!
The repetition {four times} in Hebrew communicates urgency!

The daughters of Jerusalem are pleading with Shulamith to be reconciled with Solomon and to dance before them, “that we may look upon you.”

But Solomon responds with, “Why should you gaze upon the Shulammitte as on the dance of Mahanaim?”

The “dance of two armies,” or in Hebrew “the dance of Mahanaim” does not appear anywhere else in the Bible or in literature of the time. The suggested answer is that it refers to a dance associated with the city of Mahanaim. The word without “dance” is used 200 times in the OT and translated “hosts” or “armies.”

Solomon appears to be saying, “Why should you gaze upon the Shulammitte as you would the spectacle of two armies dancing?” “The dance in which she displays all of her charms will be seen only by me!”

What will ye see in the Shulamite? ... She accepts the name Shulamite, as truly describing her. But adds, that though "one" (Song 6:9), she is nevertheless "two." Her glories are her Lord's, beaming through her (Eph 5:31-32). The two armies are the family of Jesus Christ in heaven, and that on earth, joined and one with Him; the one militant the other triumphant. Or Jesus Christ and His ministering angels are one army, the Church the other, both being one (John 17:21-22). Allusion is made to Mahanaim (meaning, two hosts), the scene of Jacob's victorious conflict by prayer. Though she is peace, yet she has warfare here; the conflict between flesh and spirit within, and that with foes without. Her strength, as Jacob's at Mahanaim, is Jesus Christ and His host, enlisted on her side by prayer: whence she obtains those graces which raise the admiration of the daughters of Jerusalem.

(from Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright © 1997, 2003, 2005, 2006 by Biblesoft, Inc. All rights reserved.)

b. The Dance of Married Love: Song 7:1-10

Now at last Solomon and the Shulammitte are alone. She dances for Solomon's eyes only. When she dances he does what he does so well; he praises her. Beginning at her feet he works his way up to her hair and praises what he sees.

How beautiful are your feet in sandals,
O noble daughter!
Your rounded thighs are like jewels,
the work of a master hand.
² Your navel is a rounded bowl
that never lacks mixed wine.
Your belly is a heap of wheat,
encircled with lilies.
³ Your two breasts are like two fawns,
twins of a gazelle.
⁴ 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.
⁵ Your head crowns you like Carmel,
and your flowing locks are like purple;
a king is held captive in the tresses.
⁶ How beautiful and pleasant you are,
O loved one, with all your delights!"
⁷ Your stature is like a palm tree,
and your breasts are like its clusters.
⁸ I say I will climb the palm tree
and lay hold of its fruit.
Oh may your breasts be like clusters of the vine,
and the scent of your breath like apples,
⁹ and your mouth like the best wine.
It goes down smoothly for my beloved,
gliding over lips and teeth.
¹⁰ I am my beloved's,
and his desire is for me.

Having praised her physical beauty from toe to head, he calls her "love," [KJV] not "my love," but love itself.

In verses 7-8 he pictures the heights he would climb for the privilege of making love to her. “Take hold” [KJV] is a word for urgency. He compares her kisses to the finest wine {9}.

At that she responds that she is his {10}.

2. The Right Place for Love

Shulamith suggests where they should go where she will be free to give herself to him.

a. Let’s go to the Country: Song 7:11

**Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field;
let us lodge in the villages.**

The word “villages” is also translated “henna blossoms,” and with the aroma of the blossoms, it would be an ideal place to spend the night.

b. Love in the Morning: Song 7:12-13

At the right place and the right time she gives herself completely to Solomon.

**¹² Let us get up early to the vineyards; let us see if the vine flourish,
whether the tender grape appear, and the pomegranates bud forth: there
will I give thee my loves.**

**¹³ The mandrakes give a smell, and at our gates are all manner of
pleasant fruits, new and old, which I have laid up for thee, O my beloved.**

c. A few notes on the culture of the time: Song 8:1-4

**O that thou wert as my brother, that sucked the breasts of my mother!
when I should find thee without, I would kiss thee; yea, I should not be
despised.**

**²I would lead thee, and bring thee into my mother's house, who would
instruct me: I would cause thee to drink of spiced wine of the juice of my
pomegranate.**

**³His left hand should be under my head, and his right hand should
embrace me.**

Although Shulamith wants to be alone among the henna blossoms she also wants everyone to know about their love. She says, “O that you were as my brother.” She does not mean that literally, but if he were her brother the prevailing social conventions against public display of affection would not apply. A sister could kiss her brother openly in that culture so she wants people to see that he is not ashamed of her and that he loves her.

She also wishes that she could take Solomon to her mother’s house where her mother taught her the facts of life.

Verse 4 is repeated to show her desire to be alone.

**I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that ye stir not up, nor awake
my love, until he please.**

To make an application to our time many parents are negligent in instructing their children about the sexual aspects of married love. Far too many children learn about sex from friends their own age, in school, and worst of all the TV and other media.

Then parents wonder why their children have so many misconceptions and really don’t seem to know right from wrong.

Your children are going to learn about sex, why don’t you instruct them?

3. The Last Word: Commitment

This is like the “curtain call” at the end of the drama. One by one the leading characters walk back on stage and take their bows and say a few words. The audience helps by recalling something that has taken place.

a. The Daughters of Jerusalem: Song 8:5

Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved? I raised thee up under the apple tree: there thy mother brought thee forth: there she brought thee forth that bare thee.

The chorus of the city women echo the question asked to open the wedding procession [3:6]. Here it is to introduce Shulamith and Solomon returning arm in arm. “Leaning” means to “take the elbow,” a picture of closeness.

b. Shulamith and Solomon: Song 8:5-7

5 Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved? I raised thee up under the apple tree: there thy mother brought thee forth: there she brought thee forth that bare thee.

⁶ Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame.

⁷ Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned.

Shulamith thinks back to the special moment when their love began. The apple tree was the symbol they used for love. Here it represents the birthplace of their love for each other. Solomon’s mother conceived him in love and loved him at first sight.

She asks for a “seal” over his heart and on his hand. In that culture people who owned property had a personal seal with which they marked their property. It was hung on a cord around the neck or worn as a ring. Shulamith is saying, “I belong to you, Solomon!”

Today the wedding ring is a sign of belonging to someone. She asks to be his “seal.”

She says love is as “strong as death.” Love is “jealous as the grave.”

Love is permanent!

Various translations have “flames of fire,” “coals of fire,” is also translated as a name for God, i.e., “Love is like the very flame of the Lord!”

Floods cannot wash love away!

c. Shulamith’s Wise Advice: Song 8:8-10

⁸ We have a little sister, and she hath no breasts: what shall we do for our sister in the day when she shall be spoken for?

⁹ If she be a wall, we will build upon her a palace of silver: and if she be a door, we will enclose her with boards of cedar.

¹⁰ I am a wall, and my breasts like towers: then was I in his eyes as one that found favour.

Now that Shulamith is a mature and influential woman, friends come to her for advice. What is appropriate for a “young sister” who is immature? How shall she be protected until the day she is spoken for?

In that culture marriage was in two stages. There was the betrothal which was a legal contract between the parents while the girl was very young. Then there was the marriage itself. The friends are concerned to know what they can do to protect her and prepare her for the forthcoming marriage.

Shulamith’s advice is to ensure that she wait until marriage as the appropriate time for sex. If she follows their advice she will be as precious as silver. If she shows signs of interest in sex she should be “enclosed with boards of cedar.”

Shulamith is well qualified to give such advice, for she was: {10}.

She is Solomon’s prized possession and has found favor.

d. King and Wife: Song 8:11-14

¹¹ Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-hamon; he let out the vineyard unto keepers; every one for the fruit thereof was to bring a thousand pieces of silver.

¹² My vineyard, which is mine, is before me: thou, O Solomon, must have a thousand, and those that keep the fruit thereof two hundred.

¹³ Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the companions hearken to thy voice: cause me to hear it.

¹⁴ Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like to a roe or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices.

Verses 11 – 12 emphasize an important point. Solomon may be the king with the right to administer his possessions as he sees fit.

However, Shulamith has committed herself to him out of love. Let the king never forget that she is his by her own choice and has chosen to give him her “vineyard” [herself] and all the benefits that come to him from having her as his wife.

In biblical marriage man and wife belong to each other. But the wife does not become a non-person. She submits to her husband freely, not because he “owns” her.

The last two verses emphasize the permanence of their relationship. The word “dwell” indicates permanent residence. She responds by inviting him to a continuing celebration of love and oneness and husband and wife.

As a Christian:

How has Christ placed you like a seal over His heart?

In what way is Christ's love for you as strong as death and His jealousy as unyielding as the grave?

Have you experienced Christ's unquenchable love?

How would you show someone that Christ's love for you is priceless?