

Song of Solomon 8 - The Progress of Love; Remembering Falling in Love; Concluding Commitment to One Another

IV. The continuing marriage (Song 5:2—8:3)

- (2) Maturation of love within marriage (Song 7:1—8:3)
 - (B) Wife's desire for her husband (Song 7:10—8:3)
 - (c) Wife wishes she had grown up with the King (8:1-2)
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- (3) Couple's concluding commitment to love one another (8:13-14)
 - (A) Husband continues to wait for his wife (8:13)
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Song of Solomon 8

- (2) Maturation of love within marriage (Song 7:1—8:3)
 - (B) Wife's desire for her husband (Song 7:10—8:3)
 - (c) Wife wishes she had grown up with the King (8:1-2)

1 "Oh that you were like a brother to me Who nursed at my mother's breasts. *If* I found you outdoors, I would kiss you; No one would despise me, either.

1 "Oh that you were like a brother to me Who nursed at my mother's breasts. *If* I found you outdoors, I would kiss you; No one would despise me, either.

1 If only you were like a brother to me, like one who nursed at my mother's breasts. If I found you outside I would kiss you, and no one would view me with contempt.

1 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.

- "Oh that you were like a brother to me" - in the ancient near east, it was considered appropriate only for close relatives to engage in public displays of love and affection
— Shulammitte "wishes" that Solomon were her brother so that she would have the freedom to express her deep love for him publicly
— She wants everyone to know how much she loves and adores her husband, however she will not overturn accepted social expectations to suffer scorn and ridicule
— Her actions may have to be curtailed for the moment, while in public, but her words trumpet a message that is music to her husband's ears

2 "I would **lead** you *and* bring you into the **house of my mother**, who used to instruct me; I would give you **spiced wine** to drink from the **juice of my pomegranates**.

2 "I would lead you *and* bring you into the house of my mother, who used to instruct me; I would give you spiced wine to drink from the juice of my pomegranates.

2 I would lead you, I would bring you to the house of my mother who used to teach me. I would give you some spiced wine to drink, from the juice of my pomegranates.

2 I 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.

- The Shulammitte now begins to role play with her husband...she assumes the role of an older sister and tells him how she would relate to him

- "...lead" - as a superior would lead an inferior

— She would lead Solomon to the home of her mother, where she received instruction

— In context, this "instruction" was on the topic of sexual intimacy and love

- "...house of my mother" - is also a euphemism for her primary sexual organ (vagina)

- The Shulammitte now tells Solomon some of the sexual instruction she received from her mother...

- "...spiced wine" - special wine was to be on the lover's menu

- "...juice of my pomegranates" - the fruit of the pomegranate are analogized to his wife's breasts

— That the overtones of her words are sensual and erotic are undeniable. The joy of lovemaking their share does not stagnate or diminish, but grows more intensive and creative as their love progresses. And much of the credit for this goes to the Shulammitte.

Solomon and the Shulammitte will now again engage in lovemaking, but the focus this time is different as well as instructive.

(d) Wife desires the King's embrace (8:3)

3 "Let his left hand *be* under my head, And his right hand embrace me."

3 "Let his left hand be under my head And his right hand embrace me."

3 Let his left hand be under my head, and let his right hand embrace me.

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

- Whether this embrace and tender touching from Solomon was before, during, or after their lovemaking is unknown. However, we see them both simply being still and enjoying one another, engaging in physical touch.

— Neither jumped out of bed to catch the news or grab a bite to eat. They just embraced, while lying there, in the afterglow of the moment.

V. Couple 's concluding instruction regarding the progress of love (8:4-14)

(1) Bride warns the daughters of Jerusalem against premarital sexual affections (8:4)

4 "Swear to me, you daughters of Jerusalem: Do not disturb or awaken *my* love Until she pleases."

4 "I want you to swear, O daughters of Jerusalem, Do not arouse or awaken *my* love Until she pleases."

4 Swear to me, young women of Jerusalem, that you won't awaken or arouse love before its proper time!

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

- For the third time (Cf. 2:7; 3:5) the importance of proper timing for lovemaking is addressed

— Obviously, the right time for lovemaking is only within the confines of marriage

— However in marriage, timing and sensitivity to the needs and feelings of our spouse is crucial as we build affection and romance in our marriage

(2) Couple reminisces on how they originally fell in love (8:5-12)

(A) Solomon recalls his early potent love memories (8:5)

5 "Who is this coming up from the wilderness, Leaning on her beloved?" "Beneath the **apple tree** I awakened you; There your mother went into labor with you, There she was in labor [and] gave birth to you.

5 "Who is this coming up from the wilderness Leaning on her beloved?" "Beneath the apple tree I awakened you; There your mother was in labor with you, There she was in labor *and* gave you birth.

5 Who is this coming up from the desert, leaning on her beloved? Under the apple tree I awakened you. There your mother had gone into labor with you; there she went into labor and gave birth to you.

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 idea of coming up from the wilderness could mean that the couple has passed through a wilderness period in their marriage, and now safely arrived on the other side
- "...apple tree" - an apple (or apricot) tree was associated with sexual activity and romance
- She calls Solomon an "apple tree" in 2:3, thus the figure of his mother being "under the apple tree" means that his mother was with his father.
- The phrase means that the two of them will now engage in the same act by which Solomon himself was given life
- "...I" - feminine pronoun; the woman again initiates lovemaking
- Three times in the Song of Solomon we're told not to awaken love until the right time (2:7; 3:5; 8:4). The time was now right according to the Shulammitte.

(B) Wife's contribution (8:6-12)

(a) Reaffirmation of the power of her love for her husband (8:6-7)

6 "Put me like **a seal over your heart**, Like **a seal on your arm**. For **love is as strong as death**, Jealousy is as severe as Sheol; Its flames are flames of fire, The flame of the LORD.

6 "Put me like a seal over your heart, Like a seal on your arm. For love is as strong as death, Jealousy is as severe as Sheol; **Its flames are flames of fire**, The flame of the LORD.

6 "Put me like a seal over your heart, Like a seal on your arm. For love is as strong as death, Jealousy is as severe as Sheol; Its flashes are flashes of fire, The *very* flame of the LORD.

6 Set me like a seal over your heart, like a seal on your arm. For love is as strong as death, passion as intense as Sheol. The flames of love are flames of fire, a blaze that comes from the LORD.

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.

- "...a seal over your heart" - she asks Solomon to set her as a seal upon his heart. A seal indicated ownership and was placed upon a person's most valuable possessions.

— The Shulammitte is asking Solomon to possess her and make her the most important thing in his life. For Solomon, this meant to love his wife with unbreakable devotion and commitment.

- "...a seal on your arm" - the arm speaks of strength and security; she desires to be a permanent possession on her husband's arm

— She seeks rest in the security of her mate. Marital love has a protective attitude. A husband should desire to shield his wife from any harm, from any injury, from any damage, or from anything that will in any way be detrimental to her.

— This includes sarcastic barbs thrown at each other in public, meant to embarrass and hurt the other. We develop each other when we magnify each other's strengths, never their weaknesses.

- "...love is as strong as death" - love is universal and unavoidable, just like death

— "strong" - an irresistible assailant or an immovable defender

— The love described here is a strong emotional attachment to a person (or thing); it is possessive and exclusive. It grasps those it lays hold of just as possessively and certainly as does death.

— The "jealousy" of this love is as hard and inevitable as the grave; it will not let go

- "...Its flames are flames of fire" - the emphasis is on the power and intensity of the fire

— It's interesting that the last syllable of "flames" in the Hebrew could refer to the divine name of the Lord (*Yahweh*). The Jerusalem Bible, ASV (1901), and NIV (margin) all take it this way. If this is correct, God Himself is seen as the source of this love.

— The love God kindles in a marriage over which He is Lord is such a fervent and fiery flame that nothing on earth can extinguish it

7 "Many waters cannot quench love, Nor will rivers flood over it; If a man were to give all the riches of his house for love, It would be utterly despised."

7 "Many waters cannot quench love, Nor will rivers overflow it; If a man were to give all the riches of his house for love, It would be utterly despised."

7 Mighty bodies of water cannot extinguish love, rivers cannot put it out. If a man were to give all the wealth of his house for love, he would surely be viewed with contempt.

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.

- True love cannot be purchased, it has no price tag. It is not even for sale.

— If a person were to try to give everything they own to purchase love, he would be despised and subjected to public ridicule

— By its very nature, love must be given. Sex can be purchased, but love must be given.

Verses 8-12 should probably be understood as a flashback to the Shulammitte's youth and initial meeting with Solomon. She grew up in a family where her brothers had been hard on her (1:6), but they were also protective. They watched over her and gave attention to her moral development and maturity. Even when she was young and had "no breasts" they kept an eye out for her as they considered the time when she would give herself to a man in marriage.

(b) Recollection of how her brothers protected her youthful virginity (8:8-9)

8 "We have a little sister, And she has no breasts; What shall we do for our sister On the day when she is spoken for?"

8 "We have a little sister, And she has no breasts; What shall we do for our sister On the day when she is spoken for?"

8 We have a little sister, and she has not yet reached maturity. What will we do for our sister to prepare her for her engagement?

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 is a wall**, We will build on her a battlement of silver; But **if she is a door**, We will barricade her with planks of cedar."

9 "If she is a wall, We will build on her a battlement of silver; But if she is a door, We will barricade her with planks of cedar."

9 If she's a wall, on her we will build a battlement of silver. If she's a door, we will enclose her with planks of cedar.

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

- "If she is a wall" - speaks of her moral purity and unavailability

— If she demonstrates such character, they will honor her as a tower of silver. She would be given freedom and responsibility.

- "...if she is a door" - on the other hand, if she was morally vulnerable and weak, they would enclose her and board her up in order to protect her

— If she is reckless and irresponsible in her behavior, they will of necessity restrict her freedom and opportunities for sexual misbehavior and foolishness

(c) Reaffirmation of her continued virginity until she met Solomon (8:10-12)

10 "I was a wall, and my breasts were like towers; Then **I became in his eyes as one who finds peace**.

10 "I was a wall, and my breasts were like towers; Then I became in his eyes as one who finds peace.

10 I was a wall and my breasts were like towers. Then I became like one who finds peace in his eyes.

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

- Of the two options given in v9 ("wall" referring to moral virtue, or "door" referring to moral failure), the Shulammitte states that she was a "wall"

— She had kept herself morally and sexually pure for her husband; she was a virgin when she married

— As a married adult, she is now a vibrant, sexually mature woman of God, whose breasts are like towers. When she was ready for marriage in every way, and her husband reaped the benefits

- "...I became in his eyes as one who finds peace" - in Solomon's eyes, his wife brought him peace (shalom), meaning "wholeness," "completeness," and "wellness" in every part of his life

— The Shulammitte made Solomon "complete"

11 "Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-hamon; He entrusted the vineyard to caretakers. Each one was to bring a thousand [shekels] of silver for its fruit.

11 "Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-hamon; He entrusted the vineyard to caretakers. Each one was to bring a thousand *shekels* of silver for its fruit.

11 Solomon has a vineyard in Baal-hamon. He entrusted the vineyard to caretakers— each one is to bring 1,000 pieces of silver in exchange for its fruit.

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

- The meaning of v11-12 are vague at best...

- It appears the main point is a contrast between Solomon's right to administer his possessions (the vineyard) as he chooses (v11), and the Shulammitte's right to give of herself as she chooses (v12)

- Solomon owned a vineyard, and leased it to tenants (caretakers). They were to produce enough from the vineyard to yield 1000 pieces of silver. In return, they would receive 200 pieces of silver for their work (v12).

12 "My very own vineyard is at my disposal; The thousand [shekels] are for you, Solomon, And two hundred are for those who take care of its fruit."

12 "My very own vineyard is at my disposal; The thousand *shekels* are for you, Solomon, And two hundred are for those who take care of its fruit."

12 My vineyard belongs to me and is at my disposal. The 1,000 are for you, Solomon, and 200 are for those who take care of its fruit.

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.

- The Shulammitte had her own "vineyard": herself and her body (Cf. 1:6)

— She belongs to no one, and therefore has the right and privilege to give herself and her love to whomever she chooses

— Solomon's vineyard is impersonal, a possession; her vineyard is intimately personal

— Gladly and happily she has given her vineyard to Solomon to be his wife; Solomon had thousands of possessions, but she was a "gift"

(3) Couple's concluding commitment to love one another (8:13-14)

(A) Husband continues to wait for his wife (8:13)

13 "You who sit in the gardens: *My companions are listening for your voice—* **Let me hear it!**"

13 "O you who sit in the gardens, *My companions are listening for your voice—* Let me hear it!"

13 You who sit in the gardens, companions are listening for your voice, but let me hear it.

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

- The Shulammitte is in the garden (she herself is a garden, Cf. 4:12ff). Like a garden, she is a source of perpetual life, joy, excitement, and pleasure to her husband.

- Friends and companions listen carefully for the voice of the Shulammitte, however Solomon wants to hear her as well

- "...Let me hear it!" - Solomon wants to hear from her as well, and his request is specific and exclusive; he asks her to call out to him

(B) Wife desires for her husband to pursue her (8:14)

14 "Hurry, my beloved, And be like a gazelle or a young stag On the mountains of balsam trees!"

14 "Hurry, my beloved, And be like a gazelle or a young stag On the mountains of spices."

14 Come quickly, my beloved, and be like a gazelle or a young stag on the mountains of spices.

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

- The Shulammitte responds to Solomon by inviting him to go away again with her, and she tells him to hurry

— She wants him to be free in his sexual feelings for her "like a gazelle or young stag"

— She invites him to "mountains of spices," a reference to her breasts and the pleasure he will find there

— Only Solomon is welcome there, and he is always welcome

— They have been married for some time now, but the passion and intensity of their love has not waned