

# The Wedding & Honeymoon

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*Song of Songs 3:5-5:1*

## The Procession of the Wedding

As the curtain closed on the last scene of the Shulamite bringing her Beloved home to her mother early in the morning to prepare for either the betrothal or wedding ceremony, so this one opens with the grand description of a wedding procession. The Shulamite begins to speak asking who is coming out of the wilderness. The question is rhetorical. The term “wilderness” does not mean desert, but the unpopulated countryside where shepherds would take their flocks. The rising of “pillars of smoke” reminds us of the fast approaching army or messenger. The scent of “myrrh and frankincense” points to a joyous occasion: the wedding procession. Consider the preparations involved for the young women who are selected for consideration to be the queen of Persia. “Each young woman’s turn came to go in to King Ahasuerus after she had completed twelve months’ preparation, according to the regulations for the women, for thus were the days of their preparation apportioned: six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with perfumes and preparations for beautifying women” (Esther 2:12).

How does a small town girl afford such expensive spices and perfumes? This section is to be considered a creation of fantasy borrowing from the scene of one of Solomon’s royal weddings and applied metaphorically to the Shulamite’s wedding. As one today might compare the grandeur of their wedding to that of Prince Charles and Diana in 1981. Her marriage was in her eyes as magnificent as any one of King Solomon’s. After all, she already sees her beloved as her King (1:4).

Thus she mentions the couch which Solomon had made for royal celebrations such as a wedding. Notice Solomon himself does not make a personal appearance in this story. He is only referenced. However it is very clear that a marriage is taking place (3:11). The “couch” is called a “palanquin” in verse nine. This luxurious form of transportation was reserved for the rich and royalty of ancient eastern Asia. It was an enclosed couch supported by long poles and supported by men. It is escorted by sixty warriors as the royal guard. This is thirty more warriors than David had as his escort during royal processions (2 Sam. 23:18-10,23). Solomon has an impressive bodyguard of men who were experienced in battle and handy with a sword. These gallant men were there for protection from “fears in the night.” Remember the Shulamite has spent a restless night upon her bed fearing the separation and even loss of her Beloved. The wedding day is finally here and she is protected from ever being experiencing the terrors in the night of being separated from her Beloved (so she thinks at his point).

A great deal of attention is focused on the opulence of the details of the carriage than on Solomon. Its frame is made of the best wood which came from Lebanon. Solomon purchased a large quantity of this wood from King Hiram to build his palace and the Temple. The wood in part may have been overlaid with silver and gold. A bed covered in linen dyed purple. “Purple cloth was particularly rare, being made from a pigment from the murex shellfish...the Phoenicians were the only ones who could make the dye” (Longman 138). The most interesting description of this royal vehicle is “its interior paved with love” (3:10). The meaning is figurative expressing the motive behind the preparations.

The Shulamite calls upon the “daughters of Jerusalem” or as they are alternately called “daughters of Zion” to check out her handsome groom. The crowning of Solomon by his mother is perhaps a reference to the groom wearing his headdress on the day of his wedding (Is. 61:10). The occasion is a great day of joy. The Shulamite and the Beloved are representative of all lovers in love. Solomon was at this time a representation of every girl’s Prince Charming. Solomon is the universal iconic groom.

## The Adoration of the Bride

The wedding has taken place. The groom is now in the marriage chamber or bedroom with his bride. They are in private. He speaks first giving a description of the bride from head to breast. This is the beginning of their honeymoon. Notice he begins with another announcement of how beautiful she is (3:1) and ends this poem with another praise for her overall beauty (3:7).

Both Egyptian love poetry and Arabian *wasfs* include like descriptions of the bride or grooms physical beauty. The term *wasfs* itself means description. Later the Shulamite will describe her Beloved from head to toe in 5:10-16 (see 6:4-10; 7:1-10).

The Shulamite is still wear her veil. It was not to be removed until they both had entered the marriage chamber. He again compliments her dove-like eyes. Next, comes a series of metaphorical descriptions of the bride which may not seem like compliments of her beauty but crude or crass insults. However, he finds her beautiful and she would have found great romance and joy in hearing him express how attractive he finds his new bride. Some of these are quite comical and grotesque to the modern mind. Yet, they are not to be taken literally.

The groom moves from her eyes to her long, flowing, dark, and curly hair. Which reminds him of the flock of goats coming down Mount Gilead on the east side of the Jordan. Paul wrote concerning a woman's hair: "*but if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her; for her hair is given to her for a covering*" (1 Cor. 11:15).

The bride's teeth are focused upon next as the groom removes the bride's veil to see her smile. He continues the shepherding metaphors comparing them to sheep shorn of the old coats of wool. When I was a boy our neighbor's had some sheep. One day my friend Russ took me over to the neighbor's barn where we watched Mrs. Ashby shear a ewe. Her wool was covered in dirt but once it was removed and the sheep was washed, it was clean and bright white. So the Shulamite's teeth are white and glistening from the moisture of her mouth every time they come up from behind her lips to form a smile. Not only are her teeth white, her groom notices that she has a perfect matching set of teeth with none of them missing. Having all one's teeth would be a deal breaker for many lovers today. Hence a great deal of money is spent of dental hygiene and dental cosmetics. [Unless you're from Arkansas or east Texas where Wal Mart has a dentist office in their stores. Some of them offer an express lane for those with twelve teeth or less].

Paying attention to her lips the groom finds them to be like scarlet ribbon. Perhaps she is wearing red lipstick. In general he finds his bride's mouth beautiful. Apparently if she were around today they would have her smile on commercials advertising toothpaste or makeup.

The "*temples*" could more likely mean the bride's cheeks in verse three. They are reddish orange like slices of pomegranates. The pomegranate was a common fruit in this area of the world.

Another description does not sound all that flattering. The Shulamite's "*neck is like the tower of David*" (4:4a). Obviously, the Beloved does not see her neck as being like that of a lineman on a football team or telling her how freakishly long it is. Since no pictures of this military structure by David exists, not much is known other than its purpose. It was to serve as an armory. The warriors would adorn it with their shields and bucklers. Perhaps, her neck is bejeweled with a necklace which reminded the shepherd of this tower.

Finally, he arrives at her breasts. They represent the young fawns who stand among the lilies on the hillside with perfect symmetry. They are twins. This very sexual and intimate comment is being made by the groom who sees the physical beauty of his bride for the first time. She would later describe her own breasts like towers (8:2).

Whereas she had sent him away until the night was over and the new day dawned. Now they will come together as husband and wife till the morning light returns (4:6a). The reference to the mountain of myrrh and hill of frankincense is most likely another description of her breasts. Her perfumed chest with myrrh and frankincense still lingers from before the wedding procession. It will be recalled she wore a purse filled with myrrh on a necklace between her breast all night long. This reminded her of her Beloved. Now he is saying she will have the real thing resting upon her chest for the night.

The Beloved concludes this Song of Adoration for his bride by praising her overall beauty. He

cannot find one blemish upon her perfect physique. This same term for “*no spot*” is used to refer to acceptable sacrificial animals, David’s son, Absalom, (2 Sam. 14:25) and Daniel (Dan. 1:4). It would be hard to imagine that any country girl who kept the family vineyard in the hot glaring Palestinian sun would have no scars or marks. Indeed, “beauty is in the eye of the beholder.”

### **The Invitation to the Bride**

In this poem the groom refers to her twice as his bride, translated “*spouse*” in the New King James. Without a doubt the marriage has taken place. Note, the term “bride” comes from a verb meaning “to complete or make perfect.” He introduces another term of endearment: “sister.” This has nothing to do with their biological relationship. The Egyptian love poetry uses it as well to describe a wife. Wives would also refer to their husbands as a “brother” without any intended reference to incest. Keep in mind that she is not really on the top of three different mountains. Amana, Senir, and Hermon are all in Lebanon. They were impressive but inaccessible places, home to dangerous predators. Shepherds would not take their flocks to graze in such a danger zone. The point he is trying to make is that she is beyond him and above him. She is inaccessible to this shepherd. They may now be husband and wife, but unless she accepts his invitation they will not consummate this relationship.

She has swept him off his feet. Therefore, he wants her, but can only bid her to be one with him. He is so smitten by her that even a single link of her necklace bowls him over. He is hopelessly in love and completely desires her. All she has to do is just give him one look with her dove-like eyes and his heart is “*ravished*” or stolen. She is driving him crazy.

### **The Admiration of Her Love**

The daughters of Jerusalem said of the Beloved, “*we will remember your love more than wine*” (1:4b). He now returns the same compliment to his bride. His “sister’s” love is beautiful and sweeter than grape juice. He loves the way she loves him. The groom praises the way she smells to him. She is not just attractive because of the way she looks but because of her fragrance which is better than all spices (4:10). There is nothing like that new wife smell.

From her smell the groom points to her lips as a source of the sweet honey like kisses. The reason is that she has “*milk and honey under her tongue*” (4:11). The lips and mouth of the adulterous woman in Proverbs 5:3-6 are also said to be “*sweet as honey*” but the result was poison and death (Proverbs 5:3-6). His bride not only smells great, she taste wonderful. The promise land was to be a place flowing with milk and honey. She is his promise land.

Even the bride’s garments smell good to the groom. “The word used is the same as that describing the covering of the wedding bed” (Gledhill 163). The Beloved is most like referring to her bed clothes or night gown. The smell of them is like the fragrance from the cedar of Lebanon.

### **The Anticipation of Their Love**

The bride is now compared to a “*garden,*” “*spring,*” and “*fountain*” (4:12). The verbs describing these are “*enclosed,*” “*shut up,*” and “*sealed.*” She is not open and free to all. She is not public but private. This is most likely a praise for her purity and virginity. Today, virginity is not a prized and virtuous thing. He praises her virginity without any sense of vulgarity. Her virgin body has been like a well kept private garden. No one has been allowed to even visit this place much less partake of its fruit or drink of its water. Both smells and tastes are combined in metaphors illustrating how wonderfully pleasant loving her will be.

The term for “*orchard*” is a word from the Persian *pardes* from which our English term “paradise” is derived. Perhaps the groom is thinking of her innocence like that enjoyed by Adam and Eve in their paradise garden. Where they had the opportunity to taste of the fruits of the garden, except one, without shame. Her garden has an abundance of pomegranate fruit. The groom lists several fragrances which are found in this paradise garden of his bride, such as, “*fragrant henna with spikenard, spikenard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense, myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices*” (4:13b,14). Surely no such garden existed outside of Genesis two. However, she is his perfect innocent

garden of Eden and he is the only Adam (man) which has every ventured there, partaken of the fruit or enjoyed the beauty or smelled its fragrances.

The groom sums up his description of her as he had begun in verse ten: “*A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon*” (4:15). She is a fresh, beautiful, well-watered paradise.

Solomon’s description of the sexual exclusiveness between a husband and wife is also conveyed in Proverbs 5:15-19:

15 Drink water from your own cistern,  
And running water from your own well.  
16 Should your fountains be dispersed abroad,  
Streams of water in the streets?  
17 Let them be only your own,  
And not for strangers with you.  
18 Let your fountain be blessed,  
And rejoice with the wife of your youth.  
19 As a loving deer and a graceful doe,  
Let her breasts satisfy you at all times;  
And always be enraptured with her love.

### **The Invitation to the Groom**

Suddenly the man’s sweet talk is interrupted by the Shulamite. Instead of speaking directly to him she calls upon the north and south wind to awaken. The term for “*awake*” her is the same one she used and will use to warn the daughters of Jerusalem not to awaken love before its time (2:7; 3:5; 8:4). Now it is the right time for love to be awakened. Her garden had been so shut up and enclosed that not even the wind from the north or the south could pass through. Now the garden is open. The fragrance of the spices can flow out freely for her man. She has accepted her Beloved’s invitation and now presents an invitation of her own. She is now his garden and he is free to eat and enjoy its fruits. Her virgin body is now his. The verb “*come*” in verse sixteen “is a standard Hebrew metaphor for sexual intercourse” (Gledhill 166). See Gen. 38:9; Ruth 4:13; Ezek. 23:44.

### **The Consummation of Marriage**

The Beloved voice is heard next. He has responded to her invitation to consummate the marriage with physical love. The use of the past tense indicates this as an accomplished fact with the use of four verbs used to describe his love-making to his bride. He has “*come,*” “*gathered,*” “*eaten,*” and “*drunk*” (5:1a).

### **The Affirmation of Marital Love**

Who is the author of the next poem (5:1b), is hard to say. It could be the daughters of Jerusalem or the author himself (Solomon) or some have even suggest God. Either way it is an affirmation that all should enjoy the eating and drinking of love. Sexual expression of love is not naughty but nice. Love between the Shulamite and the Beloved and all other married couple is “*honorable*” (Heb. 13:4). This is the climatic point of the Song of Songs.

Giovanni Leone once said, “The strongest evidence to prove that God exists is a beautiful woman.” Adam and the Beloved would likely have concurred with this.

### **Questions:**

1. T F As wedding of Solomon is figuratively applied to that of the Shulamite and her Beloved.
2. What is a “*palanquin*”?

3. How many wives and concubines does Solomon have at the time of the wedding of the Shulamite to her Beloved?
  
4. Matching: Beloved's Song of Adoration for the Shulamite
 

<p>_____ dove's eyes</p> <p>_____ flock of goats</p> <p>_____ flock of shorn sheep with twins</p> <p>_____ Lips</p> <p>_____ Temples</p> <p>_____ Neck</p> <p>_____ Breasts</p>	<p>a. Hair</p> <p>b. Like a piece of pomegranate</p> <p>c. Like two twin fawns</p> <p>d. Like the tower of David</p> <p>e. Behind your veil</p> <p>f. Like a strand of scarlet</p> <p>g. Teeth</p>
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5. How many times does the Beloved refer to the Shulamite as "spouse" or "bride" in 4:9-5:1?
  
6. How overwhelmed is the groom with the beauty of his bride?
  
7. How does he refer to her garments?
  
8. Give evidence from the scriptures in this lesson that the Shulamite is a virgin?
  
9. What is the intentions of the Shulamite in verse sixteen of chapter four?
  
10. Show from the context of our study show proof that the marriage between these newly weds was consummated.
  
11. What is affirmed in 5:1b?

**Application & Discussion:**

1. When is the right time for love to be awakened?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What are the benefits for a couple in love to wait for the wedding night to have sex?

**Homework:** Pray a prayer of thanksgiving to God for creating sex within the context of marriage.