

Song of Songs

Chapter 7

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.

7:1–7 Here the description moves up from the feet rather than down from the head (cf. 5:11–15). (CSB)

Solomon now cites ten of his wife’s features .On their wedding night he had lavished sevenfold praise upon his bride (4:1-7). Not it is tenfold, the other Hebrew number of perfection. In spite of the trials of marriage, his love is still as complete as when they were wed. (PBC)

Like his beloved, the king emphasizes the physical. That God includes these portions in His Word demonstrates that physical attraction between a man and a woman can be God-pleasing. As a matter of fact, beauty is a gift from God the Creator. Regardless of our natural appearance, all of us should try to look our personal best, especially for our marriage partner. At the same time we will recognize that today’s overemphasis on physical attractiveness is not scriptural. The Bible teaches that spiritual gifts are much more valuable and lasting. The book of Proverbs sets the correct balance in its famous section on “the wife of noble character.” “Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised” (Proverbs 31:30). (PBC)

We must read the Song of Songs in the context of the rest of Scripture. This means we can appreciate and enjoy the Son’s delight in the beautiful without losing a proper perspective. (PBC)

7:1 *noble daughter*. Alludes to the nobility of her beauty (see Ps 45:13). (CSB)

Although not of noble birth, she has always been a princess by virtue of her noble character. (PBC)

work of a master hand – Here again the poem readily lends itself to a spiritual understanding. God’s infinite power, wisdom and love are part of his very nature. People, however, are created beings. And believers are people whom God has not only created, but also recreated in Christ. “We are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do (Ephesians 2:10) (PBC)

The human body surpasses any ornamental works of art because it is, in fact, sculpted by God. God is the Artisan who is the Creator of the human body, as Luther confessed: “I believe that God ... has given me my body and soul, eyes ears, and all my members, my reason and all my

senses, and still takes care of them.” Moreover, in the person of Jesus Christ, God is the Architect of our salvation, the Redeemer of the bodies and souls of all who believe. Through the Sacraments, Holy Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, God grace comes to us through visible means that touch and hallow our bodies for service to the triune God, our Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, as expressed in the three articles of the Creed. (CC)

7:2 rounded bowl. A large, two-handled, ring-based bowl (see Ex 24:6; Isa 22:24; see also Am 6:6). (CSB)

mixed wine. Wine to which was added powdered spice (and perhaps pomegranate juice), thus enhancing its flavor. (TLSB)

With this picture Solomon seems to depict fullness and well-being. (PBC)

Solomon’s desire for his wife’s naval as a (metaphorical) bowl never to lack wine may bring to mind the promise of overflowing wine in Amos 9:13. The Bridegroom and Lord of the church prevented the wine from sunning out at the wedding in Cana, which He hallowed by His approving presence. His first sign was to change water into an overflowing abundance of the finest wine (John 2:1-11). Such passages point to a Christological and ecclesiological fulfillment of the of the Song’s theme that divine love is comparable to the finest wine. (CC)

WAIST IS A MOUND OF WHEAT – This description suggests her tan color along with the woman’s delicateness (lilies) (PBC)

encircled with lilies. The beloved perhaps wore a loose garland of flowers around her waist. (CSB)

7:4 ivory tower. Mixed imagery, referring to shape as well as to color and texture. (CSB)

Since King Solomon had built towns and fortifications in Lebanon (1 Kings 9:19), he may well have had in mind a specific tower from her home country. (PBC)

pools. The beloved’s eyes reflect like the surface of a pool; or the imagery may depict serenity and gentleness. (CSB)

Heshbon. Once the royal city of King Sihon (Nu 21:26), it was blessed with an abundant supply of spring water. (CSB)

Located c 30 mi E of Jerusalem and 21 mi E of Jericho. (TLSB)

Heshbon lay to the east of the Dead Sea, near Amman the modern capital of Jordan. The pools of Heshbon were near to the city’s water supplies. The image is of clear, sparkling water in a hot, dry land. Again the picture is one of delight. (PBC)

Bath Rabbim. Means “daughter of many”; perhaps a popular name for Heshbon. (CSB)

Perhaps the name of a gate in Heshbon, or a place to which one could travel after going through the gate. (TLSB)

tower of Lebanon. Perhaps a military tower on the northern frontier of Solomon’s kingdom, but more likely the beautiful, towering Lebanon mountain range. (CSB)

Damascus. Ancient Aramaean city, east of Mount Hermon and far from Jerusalem. (TLSB)

nose – It's said that the upturned nose, once considered the American ideal of feminine beauty, has now given way to the "stronger" nose. (PBC)

7:5 Carmel. A promontory midway along the western coast of the kingdom, with a wooded top and known for its beauty. (CSB)

Mountain ridge south of Haifa, along Israel's coast, lower than the peaks of Lebanon. (TLSB)

Like Mt. Carmel rising splendidly along the northern Mediterranean coast of Israel, she holds high her beautiful head. (PBC)

captive in the tresses. A reference to purple, royal cloth, as in 3:10. (CSB)

This color, associated with royalty, was produced along the coast of Israel. The Shulammité's hair, while not actually purple, evokes the image of royal allure. (TLSB)

The flowing black hair (4:1; 6:5) shimmers like the loose-hanging ends of the richest weaving. And like a royal robe wrapped around the king, her hair holds him captive. (PBC)

king. Solomon. (CSB)

tresses. The Hebrew for this word suggests a similarity to flowing water (cf. 4:1; 6:5). (CSB)

7:7 palm. The stately date palm. (CSB)

One aspect of the simile of the Shulammité as a palm tree and her breasts as date clusters is shared by her later simile that breasts are like towers upon a city wall (8:1). Ancient Near Eastern illustrations of men climbing date palms to gather the fruit show that those climbers used ropes or a ladder. Thus it was possible to climb the palms, but it was not an easy task; it required strenuous work. The dates were not readily accessible; they were protected by the palm's height and lack of lower branches. The Shulammité grants to Solomon access to the clusters of dates only within the bond of holy matrimony, in accord with the Shulammité's adjuration. Similarly, in 8:10 the Shulammité states by way of simile that her breasts are like towers upon a city wall. That simile portrays them as fortifications that were protected from intruders. The high towers were the stronghold, kept inviolate by the city's militia. In the same way, the Shulammité reserved her endowments solely for her husband, and she would have fought off any despoilers, just as the concerned brothers are determined to protect their little sister from any unlawful intruders (8:8-9). Even so, the church militant – especially her pastors – must maintain due vigilance to safeguard the virginity of the bride of Christ (2 Cor 11:3). (CC)

7:8-13 The excellence and glory of God's people lie in their fruitfulness. When they abound in the inward graces and outward works of righteousness, they have blessed communion with their Lord, and are safe under the banner of His love. But when they neglect His vineyard, He will take it from them and give it to others; for He must see that it is under good culture. (CB)

7:8 *I say.* To myself. (CSB)

I will climb. The beloved's beauty draws him irresistibly. (CSB)

This means to ascend the palm tree to gather its fruits, according to the oriental custom. The palm-tree is very lofty, with clusters of leaves and fruit at the top. (CB)

vine. Grape. (CSB)

apples. Perhaps the fragrance of apple blossoms. (CSB)

Perhaps it was because of such passages from above that the old Jewish rabbis required that no one read the book until reaching the age of thirty. Yet even here the poem is chaste. To use the expression from Hebrews, marriage is “honored” and “the marriage bed kept pure” (Hebrews 13:4). The husband has expressed his feelings more openly and intimately than he ever did before. In doing this the Song’s bridegroom sets a good example for all of us. Our marriages ought to be marked by a growth in intimacy and openness – especially in expressing our love for our spouse. (PBC)

In all the passages (2:3, 5; 7:8; 8:5), the apple tree and apples are associated with love. In 2:3-5 they represent Solomon’s sacrificial love, since he is the tree that gives her his own fruit; he gives himself to her, just as his name is “Oil Poured Out” (1:3), sacrificially dispensed for the benefit of others. The apples provide sustenance so that lovers and their love may endure through the risks and hardships that attend divine love according to the theology of the cross. (CC)

In those ways, the apple tree and apples may prefigure the way Jesus Christ will give His own body and shed His own blood for the forgiveness of sin and the life of the world. In this verse the scent of apples may waft from the Shulammitte because earlier she had partaken of her lover’s fruit – apples (23, 5). In the same way, the Christian church emits the fragrance of Jesus Christ, who is with and within His church – His body and bride – through His Word and Sacraments (2 Cor 2:14-16; Eph 5:2). (CC)

she

It goes down smoothly for my beloved, gliding over lips and teeth. 10 I am my beloved's, and his desire is for me.

7:10 *I belong.* Solomon has no desire to manipulate or abuse his wife. His desire is born of love. It is a sacrificial, self-giving life (e.g., “ ‘Oil Poured Out’ is your name,” 1:3) like unto that of Christ for His church, His bride, for whom He gave Himself up (Eph 5:21-33). (CC)

desire. Cf. Ge 3:16. (CSB)

6:2–7:10 Out of all the queens, concubines, and virgins that Solomon had available to him, the Shulammitte was his “only one.” But later, Solomon turned his heart away from her and from the Lord toward other interests (1Ki 11:3–4). In marriage vows, we promise to forsake all others. Thanks be to God that He does not forsake us when our hearts or thoughts stray. • Heavenly Father, You devoted Yourself to us in sending Your Son, who spared no expense for our salvation. Deliver us from all false and divided affections, that we may live for You only, in true faith and in fervent love toward those around us. Amen. (TLSB)

The Bride Gives Her Love

11 Come, my beloved, let us go out into the fields and lodge in the villages; 12 let us go out early to the vineyards and see whether the vines have budded, whether the grape blossoms have opened and the pomegranates are in bloom. There I will give you my love. 13 The

mandrakes give forth fragrance, and beside our doors are all choice fruits, new as well as old, which I have laid up for you, O my beloved.

7:11–12 In 2:10–13 the beloved reports a similar invitation from her lover.

7:11 THE VILLAGES – This word is similar to the word for “henna bushes.” Either translation captures the idea of getting away from the city and being alone. Sometimes couples become so caught up in their hectic schedules that they don’t take time to get away together. Jobs, housework, the children and church activities are important. But they needn’t get in the way of your marriage. It’s said the biggest problem in marriages is not money, sex or in compatibility. It’s neglect. God intends marriage partners to be united with one another. Take time to be together. (PBC)

The Shulammitte envisions the exchange of marital intimacy among the flora of the field (v 12). This imagery is like the bliss encountered earlier in the Song (1:16; 2:8–13). (TLSB)

7:12 *vines have budded...pomegranates are in bloom* – She has used these expressions before (6:11). There she related how she had been along among the vines and pomegranates. This time she wants her husband to be with her. (PBC)

As spring approaches, plants begin to blossom. (TLSB)

I will give you my love. She offers herself completely to her lover. (CSB)

7:13 *mandrakes.* Short-stemmed herbs associated with fertility (see note on Ge 30:14). The odor of its blossom is pungent. (CSB)

Believed to be an aphrodisiac or aid to conception (Gn 30:14–16). (TLSB)

This plant produces a fragrant purple flower and red fruit. The Bible’s only other reference to the mandrake is in Genesis 30:14–18). In that episode Jacob’s two wives, Leah and Rachel, bartered over some mandrakes. Among the ancients the mandrake was considered an aphrodisiac, hence its other name, the “love apple.” The eating of this fragrant herb was also thought to promote conception. We can understand then, why Leah and Rachel wanted the plant. Leah wanted Jacob’s love; Rachel wanted to have a child. The mandrake’s associations with love were not lost on Solomon and his beloved. (PBC)

beside our door. Where the lovers meet. (CSB)

choice fruits. Metaphor for the delights the beloved has for her lover from her “garden” (cf. 4:13–14). (CSB)

new as well as old. Those already shared and those still to be enjoyed. (CSB)

Fresh as well as dried or preserved fruit. Sign of abundance, as the previous year’s harvest has not run out. (TLSB)

She desires to keep their relationship fresh. (PBC)

8:1–4 In his commentary on the Song, S. Craig Glickman states, “Marriage is not really a single relationship. It is a composite of many relationships. Your partner is lover, friend, teacher,

student, brother or sister and child all in one person. And the better the marriage the more evident is every aspect. (PBC)

7:11–13 Within the blessing of holy wedlock, the intimacy of husband and wife is to be cherished and not neglected (1Co 7:3–5). The Lord calls husband and wife to give each other their love and bear its fruit (Gn 1:28; Ps 127:3–5; cf Sg 7:12). • Dear Lord, You desire to keep us close to You, tenderly caring for us with Your love in Word and Sacrament. Grant us fruitful marriages that do not neglect the physical aspects of our nature. Grant husband and wife time alone together to renew the bonds of holy, conjugal love. Amen. (TLSB)