

# Drama in Solomon's Harem

by Fred Flack

*Fred Flack's sermon explores the spiritual significance of the Song of Songs, highlighting the struggle between worldly allure and true love for Christ.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 23:1, Isaiah 40:11, John 10:11, Hebrews 13:20, 1 Peter 2:25, 1 Peter 5:4, 1 John 2:15, Revelation 22:20

**Topics:** "First Love", "Worldliness"

## Description

Fred Flack preaches on the victory of 'FIRST LOVE' over all the seductive influences of the world, using the alternative interpretation of the Song of Solomon. The characters of the King, the Shulamite, and the Shepherd symbolize the World, the believer betrothed to Christ, and Christ Himself. The Shulamite's unwavering love for the Shepherd amidst the temptations of the King represents the believer's 'first love' for the Lord, unaffected by worldly attractions. The sermon emphasizes the importance of not loving the world, as stated in 1 John 2:15-16, and the need to maintain a devoted and pure love for Christ above all else.

## Transcript

The Victory of 'FIRST LOVE' over all the seductive influences of this world Fred Flack To the Reader This is the alternative interpretation of the Song of Songs which was published by the Zondervon Press in their Amplified Version Job to Malachi 1962. This introduces the three characters:- The King - a figure of the World The Shulamite - a figure of the believer betrothed to the Shepherd The Shepherd - a figure of Christ A wonderful example and illustration of the "first love" of the believer for the Lord unaffected and undiminished by all the inducements and attractions of the World.

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." (1 John 2: 15-16) The above interpretation makes sense to me and it has been a great blessing to me. I am obliged to recover it for subsequent generations. A.J.(Fred) Flack The Song of Solomon Among the multitudes who read the Bible, there are comparatively few who have a clear understanding of the Song of Solomon.

Some have thought it a collection of songs, but it is more generally understood to be a sort of drama. The identity of the speakers and the length of their speeches are not disclosed. There are two partial solutions to this puzzling problem. One provides for two principal characters. The other, which is here chosen, finds in the story three principal characters, the Shepherd representing Christ, the Shulamite, representing the

individual Christian, and King Solomon representing the world.

It is believed that Solomon, realising that his worldliness was leading his people away from God, sought to make amends by warning them through this story. Those faithful to God are identified with the Shulamite, true to her unseen Lover, while most of the people, like the women of the harem, are absorbed with the splendour of the earthly King. Only Solomon could have dared to have thus pictured himself as a spiritual detriment to his people. As it is true in our Lord's parable of the prodigal son, there is not even a hint in the immediate text of this book of its spiritual significance.

Yet Jesus Himself said to read the Old Testament Scriptures, for they testify of Him and nowhere is that more obvious than in this precious book (Jn 5:39). The reader who would get the wealth of benefit to be found in it must be constantly alert to see where he personally fits into the story. And this applies to young and old alike, the book being equally suitable reading for either. To keep the spiritual identity of the Shepherd in constant view, the words, which represent Him, are in italic.

Psalms 23: 1- The Lord is my Shepherd Isaiah 40: 11- He will feed His flock like a Shepherd. John 10:11- I am the good Shepherd .... Hebrews 13:20- Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd through the blood of the everlasting covenant. . -1- *1* Peter 2:25- For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls. 1 Peter 5:4 - and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away. -2- *1* Chapter 1 The Song of Songs - the most excellent of them all - which is Solomon 's (1 Ki 4:32).

The Background Wealth is an insatiable master. The man who possesses it must need to feel the sting of its lash as it urges him forth on the never-ending search for something more, something that will add to his own store and cause it to surpass that of others. For years this exacting force had held King Solomon in its power and had given him no peace. He had built cities with vineyards, gardens and orchards in which he planted all kinds of fruits. He had constructed unexcelled reservoirs and palaces.

He had secured hosts of servants, men and women singers, rare musical instruments of all kinds and great possessions of large and small animals, above all that were in Jerusalem before him. He had filled his storehouses with gold and silver, and with the peculiar treasure of kings and provinces (Ecc 2:4-9). In response to the demands of his ambition, he had also turned his back upon the Law of Moses (Dt 17:17) and sought far and near for those whose feminine charms graced the courts of other lands, bringing them to his harem.

They were a collection, as he himself said, of "virgins without number" (Ss 6:8). Occasionally he came from his own sumptuous apartments, where all the vessels were of pure gold (1 Ki 10:21,23) and selected a favourite from among these many to return with him and keep him company. Happy and much to be envied was the woman upon whom his favour fell, to win it was the chief aspiration of each of his queens, concubines and maidens. -3- *1* The Setting There was an air of suppressed excitement throughout the great harem.

Scores of beautiful women loitered here and there in the magnificent rooms, each in her a picture to which not only nature but also art had contributed with masterly painstaking touches. Underfoot were the floors of cedar which had come from the forests of Lebanon, and beneath these were the great and costly foundation stones of the palace, cut from solid rock, stones of fifteen and twelve feet (1 Ki 7:1-11). The walls were hung with the richest of tapestries, the furnishings were of purple, the finest of linen, silver and

gold, and even the ceiling bespoke the wealth of their royal owner, whose income was said to approach 20 million dollars each year (1 Ki 10:14).

It was the anticipation of an impending visit from their lord Solomon that had aroused the harem ladies from their lethargy upon this particular day. In each heart there burned the hope that the hour of her triumph had come. The Narrative The daughters of Jerusalem One young woman is frankly proclaiming her desire to be selected by the king and the story begins. "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth", she cried. Then realising Solomon has arrived and has heard her speech, turning to him she said, "For your love is better than wine." v.3 And she continues, "The odour of your ointments is fragrant, your name is like perfume poured out, therefore do the maidens love you." v.4 But Solomon is obviously about to take his choice, and there is a chorus of voices crying, "Draw me" then as he selects one and is leaving the room, the others cried, " we will run after you".

But the chosen one answers them, "The King brings me into his apartment." The other women simply replied, addressing Solomon, "We will be glad and rejoice in you. We will recall other occasions when we were favoured with your love more fragrant than wine. The upright are not offended at your choice, but sincerely love you." -4- יְזַמְּרוּ. Suddenly into the midst of these elegantly arrayed women there was ushered a sunburned country girl, the Shulamite. For a new face to appear in the harem was no novelty, but usually it was that of a foreign princess or a person accustomed to the luxury of palaces.

This, however, was a maiden of humble origin from Shalom, a place nearby. She was conscious at once of the contrast between her own appearance and that of those around her, and with downcast eyes she said, The Shulamite "I am black." The daughters of Jerusalem "But you are lovely and pleasant," the ladies assured her. The Shulamite "O daughters of Jerusalem, I am as dark as the ugly tents of the Bedouin tribe of Kedar." The daughters of Jerusalem "Oh no," they insisted, "You are more like the beautiful curtains of Solomon." v.6 But the embarrassed Shulamite was not susceptible to their flattery.

The Shulamite "Please do not look at me," she said, "For I am swarthy. I have worked out in the sun and it has left its mark upon me. My stepbrothers were angry with me and they made me keeper of the vineyard, but my own vineyard (my complexion) have I not kept." Her dark skin soon ceased to be a source of annoyance to the captive maiden, for all skills of the apothecary were put at her disposal to improve it (cf Est 2:9-12) and her new silken robes with their elaborate embellishments of beaded jewels and precious metals were such as gladden the hearts of the princesses and queens.

But the thoughts of the Shulamite were not held by dainty garments, rare perfumes and priceless gems, for out on the Lebanon hills herding His flocks was the one object -5- יְזַמְּרוּ of her longing: for Him her heart craved. No ordinary man of the sheepfolds was He, but one so picturesque, so noble, so winsome and with a heart so true that nothing which earth's richest, wisest, most honoured sovereign could offer, could ever tempt her for a moment to forfeit her joy in Him, the Shepherd.

Since her childhood He had loved her, and one day under the apple tree, which stood beside her mother's cottage, they had acknowledged their love and pledged their troth (Ss 8:5). Other men, even the King in all his splendour seemed common beside Him and the possession of material things were as nothing in comparison to her rapture in the consciousness of His love. The Shulamite was anxious to make apparent to Solomon the strength of her affection for the matchless Shepherd for she must extricate herself from the royal net that she might marry her rustic Lover and He takes her to their home (Ss 1:16-17).

As a number of the harem ladies gathered around her she began her campaign for freedom. v.7 Addressing her distant Shepherd she said, The Shulamite "Tell me, you whom my soul loves, where You pasture Your flocks, where You make it lie down at noon for why should I, as I think of You be as a veiled one straying beside the flocks of Your companions (Ps 23: 1-2)." v.8 But the Shulamite was getting no sympathy from Solomon's loyal wives. The daughters of Jerusalem One of them said, "If you do not know where your Lover is, O thou faire st among women, run along, follow the tracks of the flock, and amuse yourself by pasturing your kids beside the Shepherd's tents." v.9 Before long Solomon came to inspect his new acquisition. -6-  $\frac{1}{4}$ Solomon v.9-11 "O my love," he said as he saw her, "you remind me of my favourite mare in my Pharaoh chariot spans.

Your cheeks are comely with ornaments, your neck with strings of jewels. We will make you chains and ornaments of gold, studded with silver." (Footnote: Does my spirit crave for the Divine Shepherd, even in the presence of the best that the world can offer me?) v.12 The vineyard girl, however, had not forgotten the task she had set herself and as soon as Solomon, who was seated, gave her an opportunity to speak, she made use of it. Whilst the king sits at his table, she said, The Shulamite "My spikenard, my absent Lover send forth His fragrance over me." v.13 "My beloved [Shepherd] is to me a cluster of henna flowers in the vineyard of En Gedi (famed for its fragrant shrubs)."

The king ignored the girl's speech and continued his suit. Solomon "Behold, you are beautiful, my love, behold, you are beautiful, you have doves' eyes." v.16 But the determined girl was quite capable of ignoring speeches as was Solomon, as if she had not been interrupted. She seized upon his own words, and addressing them to her absent Lover, she cried, The Shulamite "Behold, you are beautiful, my beloved Shepherd, yes, delightful. The home which You are preparing for us appeals to me more than any other.

Our arbour and couch are green and leafy." v.17 "The beams of our house are cedars, and our rafters and panels are cypresses and pines." -7-  $\frac{1}{4}$ Chapter 2 The Shulamite v.1 She said as she firmly faced the king, "you are quite mistaken in thinking me adaptable to these artificial surroundings, imposing as they are. I am only a little rose or autumn crocus of the plain of Sharon, or a humble lily of the valleys that grows in deep and difficult places." v.2 But Solomon replied, Solomon "As a lily among thorns, so are you my love, among the daughters."

The Shulamite v.3 "As an apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved Shepherd among the sons," cried the girl. "Under His shadow I delight to sit and His fruit was sweet to my taste." v.4 "He brought me into His banqueting house, and His banner over me was love, for love waved as a protecting and comforting banner over my head when I was near Him." v.5 "Sustain me with raisins, refresh me with apples for I am sick with love." v.6 "I can feel His left hand under my head and His right hand embraces me." (Ot 33:27; Mt 28:20) (Footnote: "Have I a constant sense of my Shepherd's presence regardless of my surroundings?") v.7 Then Solomon, seeing the futility of further effort for the present at least, turned his attention elsewhere and the Shulamite, speaking to the women about her, who were shocked at her indifference to the things they so much prized said, -8-  $\frac{1}{4}$ The Shulamite "I charge you, daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles or the hinds of the field which are free to follow their own instincts that you do not try to stir up or awaken my love until it pleases." v.8 Later, one day the vineyard girl, so homesick and uncomfortable in her false position, grew reminiscent and said she could just imagine herself at home and the recurrence of what was now a sweet memory.

Vividly she pictured it. The Shulamite "The voice of my beloved Shepherd, behold, He comes leaping upon the mountains, bounding over the hills." (Jn 10:27) "My beloved is like a gazelle or a young hart, behold, He stands behind the wall of our house, He looks in through the windows, He glances through the lattice." v.10 My Beloved speaks to me and says to me, The Shepherd "Rise up my love, my fair one, and come away." v.11 "For 10, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone, v.12 The flowers appear on the earth, the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land. v.13 The fig tree puts forth and ripens her green figs, and the vines are in blossom, they give forth their fragrance.

Arise, my love, my fair one and come away." (Footnote: Do I take time to meet my Good Shepherd every day, letting Him tell me of His love, cheering His heart with my interest in Him? Do I realise my voice in praise and song is sweet to Him, or do I withhold it? What is my greatest concern, the thing about which most of all I want Christ's help? When He asks to hear my voice, what do I tell Him?) -9-  $\frac{1}{4}$ The Shulamite v.14 So I went with Him, and when we were climbing the rocky steps up the hillside, my beloved Shepherd said to me, "O my love, while you are there in the seclusion of the clefts of the solid rock, in the sheltered and secret place of the cliff, let Me see your face, let Me hear your voice, for your voice is sweet and your face is lovely." v.15 My heart was touched and I fervently sang to Him my desire.

"Take the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vineyards of our love, for our vineyards are in blossom." v.16 Quite naturally such enthusiasm for the Shepherd had aroused the interest and curiosity of the Shulamite's hearers, but when they asked her where He was to be found that they might see Him, she said distinctly, The Shulamite "My Beloved is mine and I am His," (and added evasively) "He pastures His flock among the lilies." (cf Mt 10:32; Ac 4:12) v.17 Then longingly addressing her absent Shepherd she cried, The Shulamite "Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away, return hastily, O my Beloved, and be like a gazelle or a young hart as you cover the mountains which separate us." -10-  $\frac{1}{4}$ Chapter 3 The Shulamite "In the night I dreamed that I sought for the One that I love." (No wonder the faithful Shulamite dreamed at night of her peerless Shepherd, and it was quite in keeping with her policy to tell about it the next day to the harem ladies with whom she was associated.)

"I looked for Him but could not find Him." (Isa 26:9) v.2 "So I decided to go out into the city, into the streets and broad ways, (which are so confusing to a country girl), and to seek Him whom my soul loveth." v.3 The watchmen who go into the city found me, to whom I said, "Did you see Him whom my soul loves?" v.4 "I had gone but a little way past them, when I found Him whom my soul loves. I held Him and would not let Him go until I had brought Him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her who conceived me." (Ro 8:35; 1 Pe 2:25) v.5 "I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up nor awaken love till it pleases." v.6 Presently one of the occupants of the harem glancing out of the window saw King Solomon's bridal car approaching, the car doubtless in which many of his consorts had been brought to the palace.

The Shulamite "Who or what is this that comes gliding out of the wilderness like stately pillars of smoke perfumed with myrrh, frankincense and all fragrant powders of the merchant?" Daughters of Jerusalem v.7 Someone answered, "Behold, it is the travelling litter - the bridal car - of Solomon. Sixty mighty men are about it, of the mighty men of Israel." -11-  $\frac{1}{4}$ v.8 "They all handle the sword and are expert in war. Every man has his sword upon his thigh, that fear be not excited in the night." v.9 King Solomon made himself a car or a palanquin of state of cedar wood of Lebanon. v.10 He made its posts of silver, its back of gold, its seat of purple, the inside of it being lovingly and intricately wrought in needlework by the daughters of Jerusalem. v.11 "Go forth, O you daughters of Zion, and gaze upon King Solomon wearing the crown with which his mother (Bathsheba) crowned him on the day of his wedding, and the day of his gladness of

heart." -12- יְזַיָּא Chapter 4 Solomon "How fair you are, my love, how very fair." (For his recent wedding had not caused the royal bridegroom to forget the determined vineyard girl, whose repulses had only added to her charm for him.

Again he had found the Shulamite and renewed his wooing, no longer as the interested owner of a new possession but as a suitor resolved to win.) "Your eyes behind your veil remind me of those of a dove, your hair makes me think of the black, wavy fleece of the Arabian goats which one sees trailing down Mount Gilead, beyond Jordan on the frontiers of the desert. v.2 Your teeth are like a flock of shorn ewes, which have come up from the washing of which all are in pairs, and none is missing among them." v.3 "Your lips are like a thread of scarlet, and your mouth is lovely.

Your cheeks are like halves of a pomegranate behind your veil. v.4 your neck is like the tower of David built for an arsenal, whereon hang a thousand bucklers, all of them shields of warriors. v.5 Your bosom is like two fawns, twins of a gazelle, to feed among the lilies." v.6 The Shulamite had listened to all that she would endure without recalling to the king's mind her unconquerable love for the wonderful Shepherd. As she arose to retire she boldly declared, The Shulamite "During my waking hours you may compel my attention, but I will come the night for until the day breaks and the shadows flee away, in my thoughts I will get me to the mountain of myrrh and the hill of frankincense to Him whom my soul adores." v.7 Leaving the king who went into the banqueting hall which was set to worthily celebrate his recent marriage, and passing into her own quarters, the Shulamite lingered for a moment at the latticed window.

Suddenly her heart leaped for joy, as glancing out into the shadows she beheld the face of her extraordinary friend, the Shepherd. He, prompted by the longing and fears of His loving heart, had come to the palace to satisfy Himself of her safety and of her interest in Him alone. When he saw her through the bars of the lattice, which separated them, He exclaimed, The Shepherd "O my love, how beautiful you are. There is no flaw in you." (Jn 14:18; Eph 5:27) v.8 "Come away with Me from Lebanon, my promised bride, come with me from Lebanon.

Depart from the top of Amana, from the peak of Senir and Hermon, from the lion's den, from the mountain of the leopards." (2 Co 11: 2-3) v.9 "You have ravished my heart and given me courage, my sister, my promised bride, you have ravished my heart, my promised bride, you have ravished my heart and given me courage with one look from your eyes, with one jewel of your necklace." v.10 "How beautiful is your love, my sister, my promised bride. How much better is your love than wine?

And the fragrance of your ointments than all spices." (Ro 8:35; Jn 15:9) v.11 "Your lips, O my promised bride, drop honey as the honeycomb. Honey and milk are under your tongue and the odour of your garments is like the odour of Lebanon." v.12 "A garden enclosed and barred is my sister, my promised bride, a spring shut up a fountain sealed." v.13 "your shoots are an orchard of pomegranates or a paradise with precious fruits, henna with spikenard plants." (Jn 15:5; Eph 5:9) v.14 "Spikenard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon with all trees of frankincense, myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices." -14- יְזַיָּא v.15 "you are a fountain springing up in a garden, a well of living waters, flowing streams from Lebanon." (Jn 4: 10; 7:38-39) v.16 (Could the reply to this impassioned speech come from the same tongue which so glibly refused the advances of the world's rich and most famous king?

The Shulamite recognised in the most noble Shepherd a depth of soul, a wealth of spirit besides which Solomon's splendour became glittering tinsel, and as the bud expands in the light of the sun she joyfully yielded to Him the most sacred treasures of her heart. Her answers quieted His aching breast and brought

to Him the blissful assurance that He sought.) The Shulamite "You have called me a garden, Oh I pray the cold north wind and the soft south to blow upon my garden, that the spices may flow out in abundance for You in whom my soul delights.

Let my Beloved come into His garden and eat its choicest fruits." (Footnote: Am I willing for the north wind of adversity to blow upon me that will better fit me for Christ's presence and companionship?) -15-  
Chapter 5 The Shepherd "I am come into my garden, my sister, my promised bride; I have gathered my myrrh with my balsam and spice. From your sweet words I have gathered the richest perfume and spices. I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey, I have drunk my wine with my milk. Eat, O friends, eat, O revellers of the palace, you can never make my love disloyal to me.

Drink, yes drink abundantly of love, O precious one, for now I know you are mine, irrevocably mine." With his confident words still thrilling her being, through the lattice she saw her Shepherd turn away and pass into the night (Jn 16: 33). v.2 With her heart full of inexpressible joy, the Shulamite fell asleep that night only to awaken in dreamland. Next morning she told the story thus to her companions. The Shulamite I went to sleep, but my heart stayed awake. I dreamed that I heard the voice of my Beloved as He knocked at the door of my mother's cottage.

"Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my spotless one," He said, "for I am wet with the heavy night dew, my hair is covered with it." (Job 11:13-15) The Shulamite "But weary from a day in the vineyards, I had already sought my rest. I had put off my garment, how could I put it on? I had washed my feet, how could I again soil them?" (Isa 32:9; Heb 3: 15) (Footnote: In my weariness from earthly cares, do I hesitate to answer when the Divine Shepherd knocks at my door, and so turn Him from me?) v.4 "My Beloved put His hand by the hole of the door, and my heart was moved for Him." v.5 "I opened to my Beloved, but my Beloved had turned away and withdrawn Himself and was gone.

My soul went forth to Him when -16-  
He spoke but it failed me and now He was gone. I sought Him but I could not find Him, I called Him but He gave me no answer." v.7 "The watchman that go about the city found me, they struck me, they wounded me, the keepers of the walls took my veil and my mantle from me." v.8 "I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find Him my Beloved, that you tell Him I am sick from love, simply sick to be with Him." (Ps 63:1) Daughters of Jerusalem v.9 "What is your Beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women? (taunted the harem ladies) What is your Beloved more than another beloved that you should give us such a charge?" (Jn 10:26) v.10 Thoroughly aroused, with cheeks glowing and eyes snapping, the Shulamite broke forth in a torrent of praise for the matchless Shepherd, in which she drew upon the resources of the palace and of the mountains for comparisons, and even words were not adequate, for she was trying to describe that which the eyes of her spirit had seen, and the realms of the spirit beggars description.

She said, The Shulamite "My Beloved is fair and ruddy, the chief among ten thousand." (Jn 1: 14; Ps 45:2) v.11 "His head is precious as most fine gold; His locks are curling and bushy, and black as a raven." v.12 "His eyes are as doves beside the water brooks bathed in milk and fitly set." v.13 "His cheeks are as a bed of spices or balsam, as sweet herbs yielding fragrance. His lips are like blood red anemones or lilies, distilling liquid sweet smelling myrrh. -17-  
v.14 His hands are as rods of gold, set with nails of beryl and topaz.

His body is a figure of bright ivory overlaid with veins of sapphire. v.15 His legs are as strong and steady pillars of marble set upon bases of fine gold. His appearance is like Lebanon, excellent, stately and

majestic as its cedars." v.16 "His voice and speech are exceedingly sweet, yes, He is altogether lovely; the whole of Him delights and is precious. This is my Beloved and this is my Friend, a daughters of Jerusalem." (Footnote: Is my Saviour unquestionably the One altogether lovely, the One above all others most precious to me?

Can I tell how and why Christ is more to me than any other human being or than all earthly possessions?) -18- <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>Chapter 6 Daughters of Jerusalem "Where is your Beloved one, O you fairest among women?" (Again the harem ladies showed their interest in the remarkable Person whom the Shulamite had championed with such untainted praise) "Where is your Beloved hiding Himself? For we would seek Him with you." The Shulamite v.2 "My Beloved is gone down to His garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the garden and to gather lilies." v.3 "I am my Beloved's garden and my Beloved is mine.

He feeds among the lilies which grow there." v.4 During the discussion King Solomon has entered the room and has heard the impassioned defence of the Shepherd by the animated Shulamite who se furore had only been intensified by her consciousness of the king's presence. Filled with admiration for her and yet aware of the strength of purpose in her before which he was helpless, he listened until she had finished her speech, and then said, Solomon "You are as beautiful as Tirzah (capital of northern Israel's first king), my love, and as comely as Jerusalem, but you are terrible as a bannered host." v.S "Turn away your flashing eyes from me, for they have overcome me.

Your hair is like a flock of goats which trail down from Mount Gilead." v.6 "Your teeth are like a flock of ewes coming from their washing, each is paired, none of them is missing." v.7 "Your cheeks are like halves of a pomegranate behind your veil." v.8 "There are sixty queens, and eighty concubines, and virgins without number." -19- <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>v.9 "But my dove, my undefiled and perfect one stands out above them all, she is the only one of her mother's daughter. She is the pure one of the mother that bore her.

The daughters saw her and called her blessed and happy, yes, the queens and the concubines they praise her." (Col 2:8-9) (Footnote: Solomon probably wrote this book and the statement before us prior to his more degenerate years, before he had his seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines.) v.10 The ladies of the harem were fascinated with the girl's unusual display of spirit and wanted to know how she happened to be there, a vineyard girl among princesses. They asked, Daughters of Jerusalem "Who is this who looks forth as the dawn, fair as the moon, clear and pure as the sun, and terrible as a bannered host?"

The Shulamite v.11 "I went down into the nut orchard one day to look at the green plants of the valley, to see whether the grapevine had budded and the pomegranates were in flower." v.12 "Before I was aware of what was happening, my desire to roam about had brought me into the area of the princes of my people, the king's retinue. I began to flee but they called to me." Solomon and friends v.13 "Return, return, O Shulamite, return, return that we may look upon you." The Shulamite "What is there for you to see in the poor, little Shulamite?"

Solomon and friends "As upon a dance of two armies or a dance of Mahanaim." -20- <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>Chapter 7 Then her companions began noticing and commenting on the attractiveness of her person. The Daughters of Jerusalem "How beautiful are your feet in sandals, O queenly maiden. Your rounded limbs are like jewelled chains, the work of a master's hand." v.2 "Your body is like a round goblet in which no mixed wine is wanting, your abdomen is like a heap of wheat set about with lilies." v.3 "Your bosom is like two fawns, the twins of a gazelle." v.4 "Your neck is like a tower of ivory, your eyes as the pools of Hesbon, by the gate of

Beth-rabbim, your nose is like the tower of Lebanon which looks toward Damascus." v.S "Your head crowns you like Mount Carmel and the hair of your head like purple."

Then seeing the king watching the girl with absorbed admiration, the speaker added, "The King is held captive in its tresses." v.6 The king came forward as if to take the Shulamite in his arms, saying Solomon "How fair and how pleasant you are, O love for delights." v.7 "Th is your stature is like to a palm tree and your bosom to its clusters of dates." v.8 "I resolve I will climb the palm tree, I wi11grasp its branches. Let your breasts be as clusters of the grapevine, and the scent of your breath like apples." v.9 "And your kisses like the best wine that goes down smoothly and sweetly ...

" -21- iġ¼The Shulamite " ..for my beloved Shepherd, kisses gliding over his lips while He sleeps." v.IO With a dignity which repulsed the ardent king and kept him at a distance, the splendid creature had made herself mistress of the situation. With a finality which showed Solomon the futility of longer detaining her, and with an exaltation of spirit which shamed the sensuous king and his consorts to silence, she proudly said, The Shulamite "I am my Beloved's and His desire is toward me." (Jn 10:28) v.II The Shulamite not slow to recognise that the hour of her release had come, at once sent word to her wonderful Shepherd that she was free to marry Him.

She said, The Shulamite "Come, my Beloved. Let us go forth into the field, let us lodge in the villages."(Lk 14:33) v.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." v.13 "The mandrakes give forth fragrance, and over our doors are all manner of choice fruits, new and old, which I have laid up for you, o my Beloved." -22- iġ¼Chapter 8 Looking forward to the Shepherd's arrival, the eager girl pictures their meeting and says, The Shulamite "O that you were as my brother, who nursed from the breasts of my mother.

When I should find you without, I would kiss You, yes, none would despise me for it." (Ps 143:6) v.2 "I would lead You and bring You into the house of my mother, who would instruct me. I would cause You to drink of spieed wine and the juice of my pomegranates." (To the daughters of Jerusalem she musingly added) v.3 "O that His left hand were under my head and that His right hand embraced me." (Ex 19:4; Ot 33:27) v.4 "I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that you never again attempt to stir up or awaken love until it pleases." v.S The ardent Shepherd lost no time in coming for His loyal bride-to-be, and soon they were on their journey to her home.

Seeing them approaching some observer greeted them by saying, "Whom is this who comes up from the wilderness leaning upon her Beloved" And as they sighted the home of her childhood, the Shepherd said, The Shepherd "Under the apple tree I awakened you. There your mother gave you birth, there she was in travail who bore you." v.6 "Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm, for love is strong as death, jealousy is as hard and cruel as Sheol, the abode of the dead. Its flashes are flashes of fire, a most vehement flame, a very flame of the Lord." (Isa 49: 16; Ot 4:24; 1 Co 10:22) -23- iġ¼v.7 "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it.

If a man would offer all the goods of his house for love, he would be utterly scorned and despised." v.8 Gathered with her family and the wedding guests in her mother's house, the bride said to her stepbrothers, The Shulamite "When I was a little girl, you said, '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 in marriage? v.9 If she is a wall, discreet and womanly, we will build upon her a turret (a dowry) of silver, but if she is a door (bold and flirtatious), we will

enclose her with boards of cedar." v.10 "WeU, I am a wall with battlements, and my breasts like the tower of it.

Then was I in the king's eyes one to be respected and allowed to find peace." v.11 "Solomon had a vineyard at Baal Harmon, he let out the vineyard to keepers, every one for the fruit of it was to bring Him a thousand pieces of silver." v.12 "You, O Solomon, can have your thousand, and those who tend the fruit of it two hundred, but my vineyard, which is mine (with all its radiant joy), is before me." v.13 Then the Bridegroom so long in the background, said to his bride, The Shepherd "O you who dwell in the gardens, your companions have been listening to your voice, now cause Me to hear it." (And a voice came forth from the throne (Rev 19:5, 7-9) saying, "Give to our God all ye His servants, and you who fear Him both small and great.

Let us rejoice and be exceeding glad, and let us give the glory unto Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife hath made herself ready. And it was given unto her that she should array herself in fine linen, bright and pure, for the fine linen is the righteous -24- acts of the saints. And he said to me, write blessed, happy, fortunate and to be envied are they who are bidden to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he said unto me. These are the true words of God.

Joyfully, the radiant Bride turned to Him, the One altogether lovely, the chief among ten thousand to her soul, and with unconcealed eagerness to begin her life of sweet and intimate companionship with Him, she answered, "Make haste, my Beloved, and come quickly like a gazelle or a young hart and take me to our waiting home upon the mountains of spices." (Rev 22:20: He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming quickly." Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!) -25-

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