

SONG OF SONGS 3:1-11

She searches for her absent lover (3:1-4)

¹Upon my bed night after night I sought him whom my soul loves; I sought him, but did not find him; I called him, but he gave no answer.

²"I will rise and make my way through the city. In the streets and in the squares; I will seek him whom my soul loves."

I sought him, but did not find him.

³The sentinels came upon me, as they made their rounds in the city.

"Have you seen him whom my soul loves?"

⁴Scarcely had I passed them, when I found him whom my soul loves. I held him, and would not let him go until I brought him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her that conceived me.

⁵I adjure you, O Daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles and hinds of the fields: do not disturb or interrupt our love until it is spent!

Here we have a very different mood of love. Bewilderment and anxiety replace the rapture of the earlier scenes. As she lies in bed her need and her yearning for him is overwhelming, for she loves him with every part of her being (her *nepeš*; see 1:7).

She can wait no longer, so she rises from her bed and searches for him throughout the city. In doing so she breaks all social taboos: she is out alone, at night, and is so desperate that she initiates conversation with the men guarding the city. She will let nothing stop her finding the one who alone can satisfy her urgent longing.

She finds him, embraces him and will not let him go till she takes him to the place where her mother conceived her.

She speaks to the chorus (3:5)

She repeats the refrain from 2:7 (see also 5:8; 8:4). They must be left to consummate their love.

We might pray the following from the Psalms:

Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire other than you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

– Psalm 73:25-26

The chorus chants (3:6-10)

She has spoken on her lover as a 'king'(1:4, 12). The chorus sings of a royal wedding day, with *the* king (Solomon) in all his power and glory, luxury and exotic perfumes.

The warriors are there to protect the king from 'the terrors of the night': the demons who were thought to threaten the conjugal bed (see Tobit 6:14-15).

Solomon is being carried in a magnificent canopied litter, the 'palanquin' [פָּרָשָׁה, 'appiryōn - a Persian loan word] 'woven with love',

Mindful of Solomon's nuptials, the chorus, the 'Daughters of Jerusalem', summon each other to 'go forth' and celebrate the nuptials of the woman and her lover.

⁶What is this coming up from the desert, like a column of smoke? Perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all kinds of exotic powders?

⁷Look, it is the litter of Solomon! Around it are sixty mighty men of the warriors of Israel. ⁸All skilled with the sword, expert in war; each with his sword at his thigh ready for the terrors of the night.

⁹King Solomon made himself a palanquin from the wood of Lebanon. ¹⁰He made its columns of silver, its roof of gold, its seat of purple; its interior woven with love.

¹¹Daughters of Jerusalem, go forth! Look, Daughters of Zion, upon King Solomon, wearing the crown with which his mother crowned him on the day of his wedding, on the day of the joy of his heart.

