

SONG OF SONGS 8:5-14

⁵Who is this coming up from the wilderness, leaning upon her lover?

Under the apple tree I aroused you. There your mother conceived you; there she who bore you conceived.

⁶Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm;

Strong as death is love, passion as fierce as Sheol.

Its flashes are flashes of fire, a flame of Yah.

⁷Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it. If one were to offer all his wealth for love, it would be utterly scorned.

The Chorus asks (8:5a)

The opening words echo 3:6. The lovers emerge together from the wilderness.

We recall Paul's words to the community in Colossae:

If you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth, for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory.

– Colossians 3:1-4

Her lover speaks (8:5b)

The apple tree recalls 2:3 and 5. Once again a connection is made between their love and the love in which she was conceived (see 3:4; 8:2). The cycle of lovemaking and life-giving continues.

She speaks (8:6-7)

A seal was hung around the neck, or worn as a ring on the hand. She wants to be identified as his, his alone, like his personal seal.

Death is all-consuming. Love is to be like that. Death and Sheol (the grave) are unrelenting in their pursuit. Nothing can stand against them. Love is to be like that. 'Death' and 'Flame' are Canaanite gods. 'Yah' is the shortened form of YHWH (see Psalm 118:5) – the only mention of God in the Song. Love's power is divine.

We recall Jesus' words:

I came to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!

– Luke 12:49

'Waters' and 'floods' recall the god of chaos. He, too, cannot overpower love.

You cannot purchase love.

The chorus (8-9)

The chorus recalls the care that was given to protect her when she was a young girl not yet ready for marriage.

The protective barrier that was built around her is compared to a wall protecting a city. At the same time care was taken to see her beauty mature. Hence the 'battlement of silver'. The gates that defend her from forced entry were also reinforced.

She speaks (8:10)

She kept herself for her lover and now she can proclaim that she is well and truly ready for marriage. She has surrendered herself to her lover and so brought about peace (šālôm)—another link with 'Solomon' (š'lōmōh; see 1:1; 3:9; 3:11).

The chorus (8:11)

Solomon's power and wealth put him in a position to require others to care for his vines and it brought in much wealth.

Her lover claims her as his own (8:12)

Solomon can have the luxury of his vines. The lover has her, his very own vineyard (compare 1:6). She is worth more than all the vineyards of Solomon.

⁸We have a little sister, and she has no breasts. What shall we do for our sister, on the day when she is spoken for?

⁹If she is a wall, we will build upon her a battlement of silver; but if she is a door, we will enclose her with boards of cedar.

¹⁰I was a wall, and my breasts like towers; then I have become in his eyes as one who finds peace.

¹¹Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-hamon; he entrusted the vineyard to keepers; each one was to bring for its fruit a thousand pieces of silver.

¹²My vineyard, my very own, is for myself; you, O Solomon, may have the thousand, and the keepers of the fruit two hundred!

¹³You who dwell in the garden, my companions are listening; let me hear your voice.

¹⁴Make haste, my beloved, and be like a gazelle or a young stag upon the mountains of spices!

Her lover speaks (8:13)

He longs to hear her voice (compare 2:14), as do his companions (compare 1:7). In 1:3, the other young women could not but admire the man she loved. Here, it is the same for the man's friends.

She replies (8:14)

Her reply echoes an earlier response (2:17). Here she wants him to leave everything and hasten to the delights that she is keeping for him.