

Review of SOS 2:8-17: the Tryst of the Shepherd & the Shulammite; Her Disorientation under Pressure; Reorientation by Recall

(56) A review of her recall of their tryst at her family's estate will read us back into the flow of the opera:

SOS 2:8 - [SW] "Listen! My beloved! Behold, he is coming, climbing on the mountains, leaping on the hills!

v. 9 - [SW] "My beloved is like a gazelle or a young hart. Behold, he is standing behind our wall, he is looking through the windows, he is peering through the lattice."

v. 10a - [SW] "My beloved responded and said to me,

v. 2:10b - [SL] "'Arise, my darling, my beautiful one, and come along.

v. 11 - [SL] 'For behold, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone.

v. 12 - [SL] 'The flowers have already appeared in the land; the time has arrived for pruning the vines and the singing of songs, for the singing of the turtledove has been heard in our land.

v. 13 - [SL] 'The fig tree has put forth its green figs, and the vines in blossom have given forth their fragrance. Arise, my darling, my beautiful one, and come along!'

v. 14 - [SW] "O my dove, in the private place of the rock stairwell, in the secrecy of the staircase, let me take a good look at you, let me hear your voice. Your voice is pleasingly resonant and you are handsome."

v. 15 - [SB1&2] "Catch the foxes for us, the little foxes that are ruining the vineyards, while our vineyards are in blossom."

v. 16 - [SW] "My beloved is mine, and I am his; he pastures his flock among the lilies."

v. 17 - [SW] "Until the cool of the day when the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved, and be like a gazelle or a young stag on the mountains of Bether \bē' ther\."

Review:

1. The Shulammite's reverie with the Shepherd is interrupted by her brothers' discovery of their stairwell tryst. They throw him out and banish her to the family vineyards to chase off foxes.
2. The memory of this ill-timed invasion of their time together brings her back to the present circumstance in Solomon's tent.
3. And so she orients to the reality of the moment. The Shepherd is back with the sheep in Sharon Plain and she is sequestered in Solomon's tent near Shunem.
4. The Shulammite, faced with the pressure of Solomon's advances in effect offers a prayer that her Shepherd would save her.
5. In verse 17 her appeal for him to rush to her rescue is found in the word "turn," the Qal imperative of the verb קָבַב **savav** which means "to turn around."

6. The implication is urgency. She wants the Shepherd to stop what he is doing and hurry to her aid. The course he is to take is “on the mountains of Bethar”: בֵּתָר. This does not refer to a specific mountain range but rather to the central mountains of Israel which separate the Sharon Plain from Shunem.
7. For him to come to her he must travel through the mountains that separate them, i.e., the mountains of “separation,” or the mountains of *bethar*. His most likely route is through the Valley of Jezreel.
8. One of the major underlying principles of the second chapter of Song of Solomon is how the Shulammite, while under pressure, consistently responds to her right man. He is in her soul and it is him that her soul loves.
9. This is the mental attitude that the believer is to have toward the Lord. Even though He is physically absent from us, the omnipresence of His deity indwells us and we are never alone.
10. Consequently, He is ever-present to comfort, provide, protect, and defend us. This principle is affirmed by the Psalmist in Psalm 46, “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.”
11. The Shulammite’s concentration on her right man reveals her response to him as her earthly source of protection and provision. It is his responsibility to come to her aid and she is confident that the Lord will both alert him to her plight and use him to deliver her.
12. The confrontation with Solomon keeps the Shulammite under constant pressure. She is forced to concentrate in two areas in order to maintain her mental stability.
13. She must continue to reject Solomon’s advances while simultaneously keeping the image of her right man in her conscious mind.
14. Yet as Solomon presses her for a decision by means of his pick-up lines, she is having difficulty maintaining her concentration on her right man.
15. From this we see a comparison between the believer under pressure from the temptations of *cosmos diabolicus* while trying to remain focused on the Lord and His mandates.
16. Solomon represents the devil’s world and functions as an *agent provocateur* for Lucifer who is the ruler of this world. The Shulammite illustrates the believer who is under assault from the Dark Side. And the Shepherd is identified with Jesus Christ and the commandments that He has implored us to apply, “If you love Me, keep My commandments.”
17. Her failing efforts to concentrate on her absent Shepherd cause her to remember a similar occasion during her courtship with him. It was an occasion when she was residing in the same community with him, we assume Shunem but possibly elsewhere.
18. When a romantically involved woman is lonely and memory fails to sustain her under pressure then she desperately desires to be with her right man. Thus her memory center recalls another time when she was lonely and sought out the Shepherd so she could be with him physically rather than just mentally.
19. This returns us to Chapter 3 as the Shulammite’s aria continues:
Song of Solomon 3:1 - [SW] “On my bed night after night I sought him whom my soul loves; I sought him but did not find him.”
20. Under pressure, it is the doctrine that you cannot forget that enables you to endure the moment. If fear and panic trump memory then you are handicapped in your ability to manage the crisis.

