

Song of Solomon 5 - Part 1

Song of Solomon 5:1-16 NLT

Young Man I have entered my garden, my treasure, my bride! I gather myrrh with my spices and eat honeycomb with my honey. I drink wine with my milk.

Young Women of Jerusalem Oh, lover and beloved, eat and drink! Yes, drink deeply of your love! Young Woman I slept, but my heart was awake, when I heard my lover knocking and calling: “Open to me, my treasure, my darling, my dove, my perfect one. My head is drenched with dew, my hair with the dampness of the night.” But I responded, “I have taken off my robe. Should I get dressed again? I have washed my feet. Should I get them soiled?” My lover tried to unlatch the door, and my heart thrilled within me. I jumped up to open the door for my love, and my hands dripped with perfume. My fingers dripped with lovely myrrh as I pulled back the bolt. I opened to my lover, but he was gone! My heart sank. I searched for him but could not find him anywhere. I called to him, but there was no reply. The night watchmen found me as they made their rounds. They beat and bruised me and stripped off my veil, those watchmen on the walls. Make this promise, O women of Jerusalem—If you find my lover, tell him I am weak with love. Young Women of Jerusalem Why is your lover better than all others, O woman of rare beauty? What makes your lover so special that we must promise this? Young Woman My lover is dark and dazzling, better than ten thousand others! His head is finest gold, his wavy hair is black as a raven. His eyes sparkle like doves beside springs of water; they are set like jewels washed in milk. His cheeks are like gardens of spices giving off fragrance. His lips are like lilies, perfumed with myrrh.

His arms are like rounded bars of gold, set with beryl. His body is like bright ivory, glowing with lapis lazuli. His legs are like marble pillars set in sockets of finest gold. His posture is stately, like the noble cedars of Lebanon. His mouth is sweetness itself; he is desirable in every way. Such, O women of Jerusalem, is my lover, my friend.

### **Daily Deep Dive:**

The UCG reading program states: "Song of Solomon 5:1 concludes the fourth and central major section of the book. A new unit commences with an entirely new scene in Song of Solomon 5:2. Before leaving the central section, it should be pointed out that some see the wedding and consummation here as a wish for the future--rather than as already achieved by the lovers at this point in the Song. However there is every indication that the events here are in the present--and no hint that they are yet to come. Nevertheless, such an idea is possible if the Song is not strictly chronological in its arrangement and is more like stream of consciousness--so that the woman's determination to marry the man at the end of the previous dreamlike unit (see Song of Solomon 3:4) gives way to thoughts here about the wedding and consummation. It is true that there is no mention of the word "spouse" or "bride" beyond this unit--although there seem to be other indications that the man and woman are married in later parts of the Song, as we will see. Those who press the issue of the marriage not yet having taken place in the center of the Song usually do so because they are seeking a coherent alignment with the relationship between Christ and the Church--for the section that follows implies a problem between the couple, which is difficult to apply to Jesus and His perfected Bride being already married. The matter, as with so much else in the Song, is uncertain.

["I Sought Him, But I Could Not Find Him"](#)

We come now to the fifth major section of the Song. It begins at Song of Solomon 5:2, which clearly describes a different scene entirely from that of the previous verses, but there is dispute as to where this section ends. Many have noted the obvious similarity between verses 2-8 and the earlier dreamlike unit of Song of Solomon 3:1-5 (the third major section of the Song). Both segments begin with the woman lying in bed at night. Both describe her rising, probably in mind rather than literally, to search about the city for her beloved, whom she can't seem to find. Both mention her being found by the city watchmen. And both segments show her afterward issuing a charge to the daughters of Jerusalem. There are key differences though. The former passage apparently concerned multiple instances ("By nights..."). The current one gives no such indication. In the former case, the woman was merely wondering in desperation about where the man was when she went to look for him. In this later passage, the man arrives at night, is apparently turned away by the woman, and then leaves, whereupon she *then* goes out in a desperate search for him. In the former passage, the woman was merely found by the watchmen. Here they abuse her. In the former unit, the woman immediately found the man and declared her intention for union with him. Here she does not immediately find him—so resolution is lacking. In the former sequence, the woman's charge to the daughters of Jerusalem was a repeat of the refrain to not awaken love until it's acceptable—and this (Song of Solomon 3:5) formed the end of the unit. Here the charge is that if they find him to tell him that she is lovesick—and this (Song of Solomon 5:8) clearly does *not* form the end of the unit since the daughters respond to her charge in the next verse. Where, then, does this later unit end—and how are we to understand it?

Determining the end of the major section of the Song that begins at Song of Solomon 5:2 involves following the story flow, considering the symmetrical parallel with the aforementioned third

major section of the Song (Song of Solomon 3:1-5) and observing a chiasmic structural pattern that begins at Song of Solomon 5:2 and recognizing where this pattern concludes. Let's take these one at a time.

First the story flow. Verse 9 is clearly the response of the daughters of Jerusalem to the Shulamite's charge in the preceding verse, as they mention her charge explicitly. Observe that their response is a question about why her lover is so special. This then sets up the Shulamite's description of her lover in verses 10-16 (the last verse explicitly addressing the daughters).” The daughters then respond in Song of Solomon 6:1, and the Shulamite answers them in verses 2-3. Verse 3 here, concerning the mutual possession of the lovers, appears to be a refrain (see also Song of Solomon 2:16; Song of Solomon 7:10). This and the fact that the man's praise speech beginning in Song of Solomon 6:4 is not introduced has led some to consider Song of Solomon 6:3 as the end of the unit. Yet we should consider that the man's earlier praise speech beginning in Song of Solomon 4:1 is not introduced and appears to continue the same unit as that begun in Song of Solomon 3:6. Indeed, Song of Solomon 6:2-3 seems to convey a return of the lover, so that his speaking thereafter would follow naturally from that (though shepherd-hypothesis advocates view this differently, as we will consider shortly).

The man's praise of the woman beginning in verse 4 continues through verse 9 with the mention of queens, concubines and "daughters" praising her. Some see this as a section ending, taking the next words in verse 10, "Who is she...?" to begin a new section, parallel to these words occurring at the commencement of the central and final major sections of the Song (see Song of Solomon 3:6; Song of Solomon 8:5). However, the question in Song of Solomon 6:10 seems most likely to be the words of the queens, concubines and daughters just mentioned in verse 9 (or

the man quoting them)—making it a continuation of the same section. (Note also that verses 4 and 10 end the same—the full context indicating that these are the bracketing verses of an inclusio.)

Verses 11-12 are difficult with respect to who is saying them and what they mean (verse 12 does follow from verse 11). Some note the parallels between verse 11 and Song of Solomon 7:12 and take these verses to be the beginning and end of an inclusio.

However, the theme and scene of Song of Solomon 7:12 obviously continues beyond it. Still, Song of Solomon 6:11 could be the beginning of a new section, but there is no clear break to indicate this. Indeed, some have argued that verses 11-12 are a response to the women in verse 10.

Verse 13 is taken as a new section in modern Hebrew Bible chapter divisions—which are the same as in the English versions throughout the Song except here. (What English Bibles number as 6:13, Hebrew Bibles number as 7:1—and Hebrew verse numbers are all one number higher than in English versions throughout chapter 7.) Yet while Song of Solomon 6:13 (English numbering, which we will adhere to throughout) does appear to go with the praise song that follows in chapter 7, perhaps inspired by the dance of 6:13, this verse—especially if the word rendered "return" is properly translated—would seem to be a call in response to the previous verse (or at least a response to seeing the Shulamite, who appears in verse 10). So there seems to be no break here. The praise sequence in chapter 7 then continues through the middle of verse 9, where the woman breaks into the thought (which we will examine more shortly). She then makes a statement in verse 10 similar to the refrain of mutual possession in Song of Solomon 2:16 and Song of Solomon 6:3. The woman's call in Song of Solomon 7:11 to come away could then denote a continuation of the same section or, particularly if verse 9 refers

literally to sleep, the start of a new section. We will stop here to go to the next ending determinant.

The second factor here is the symmetrical parallel with the third major section of the Song, the dreamlike unit mentioned above (Song of Solomon 3:1-5). The wedding and consummation appear to form the fourth and central section of the Song (3:6–5:1). On either side of that segment are these similar dreamlike sequences. Note that the former section went from the woman's panicked loss of her lover to the joy of reuniting with him. In parallel, we would expect the panicked loss of her lover in the latter section to conclude with a happy reunion. It does—but not right away. Still, despite the longer length of the latter section in reaching resolution, it is sensible that its conclusion should come with the reunion. This could conceivably come with Song of Solomon 6:3, but all is not clearly resolved until the implied sexual union of Song of Solomon 7:9.

Third is the issue of the apparent chiasmic structure of this section, as discovered by Dr. Craig Glickman. Recall the chart from his book *Solomon's Song of Love* showing the symmetrical outline of the entire Song (an adaptation of which is reproduced in our introduction). Well, he also provides an expanded diagram of each major section—which greatly helps in comprehending the structure of the current section (see below). The diagram for this section reveals that the unit beginning at Song of Solomon 5:2, with the Shulamite *sleeping alone*, continues through Song of Solomon 7:9, where it is implied that the lovers are *sleeping together*. However, the refrain of verse 10 appears to complete the thought here. Looking at the chart, consider that another form of this refrain also occurs in Song of Solomon 6:3 as a transition to the central subsection of the chiasm (i.e., from subsection c to d). Thus, it also seems logical as a transition at the end of the chiasm leading into the next major section. Dr. Glickman himself groups Song of Solomon 7:10 with the next section, as the

beginning of the second section from the end, because another form of the refrain occurs near the end of the second section from the beginning (in Song of Solomon 2:16). Still, he does view Song of Solomon 7:10 as transitional from the current unit. Indeed, he generally regards the section breaks as transitional, at times with some overlap, rather than as hard and fast (and that may well be the case). Note that there are seven subsections within this unit—as detailed in the chart.

It may be noted that this unit (5:2–7:10) is by far the longest unit in the Song—set symmetrically opposite to what is by far the shortest unit in the Song (Song of Solomon 3:1-5). It is not known why the Song was composed this way—but it has the very interesting effect of making the actual center of the Song (4:16–5:1) fall at the end of the central unit (3:6–5:1) rather than in the middle of the central unit. It also serves to stress the greater magnitude and impact of events in this longest section as compared with the earlier problem in the shortest section.

**5:2-8:** Now let us proceed into what is happening within this unit, starting with the first subsection (Song of Solomon 5:2-8). The man knocks to be let in at night after the woman has gone to bed and is sleeping (Song of Solomon 5:2-3). If the Song is arranged chronologically, this episode would seem to occur after the couple is married—unlike the previous dreamlike sequence, which appears to have preceded their wedding. Of course, this is assuming that the apparent sequence of the wedding and the wedding night in 3:6–5:1 concerns a real and present event rather than a dream or wish for the future—and that 5:2–7:10 is not a flashback to the premarital courtship or engagement period. Indication that the couple is married is found in the fact that the man is seeking entry very late at night, when the dew makes his hair wet (Song of Solomon 5:2). Some argue that this is still during the seven-day wedding festival and that the man is late in coming to the bridal chamber, having been reveling with his

friends. But the setting may well be sometime later, in the couple's private home.