



The Shulammite's Puns: Burning & Vineyards; the Sexual Metaphor of "My Vineyard"; Principles: How to Vet Your Right Person & When Not to Marry

SOS1:6a - [SW] "Do not stare at me because I am dark, for the sun has burned my skin."

1. This comment clarifies the translation in verse 5 that the Shulammite is sunburned due to her duties working outdoors in the family vineyard.
2. She knows that she is not presentable and tells the Daughters they are not to stare at her because of her dark complexion. She also feels the need to explain the reason she is sunburned:

SOS1:6b - [SW] "My brothers were angry with me ..."

1. The Shulammite uses a pun in this quote. She has been burned by the sun because her brothers were burning with anger about her relationship with the Shepherd Lover.
2. The word for "angry" is the Niphal stem of the verb **חָרָה** *charah*:

Harris, R. Laird, Gleason L. Archer, and Bruce K. Waltke. *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 322:

חָרָה *charah*. This word is related to a rare Aramaic root meaning "to cause fire to burn." The Hebrew verb is always used in reference to anger. The meaning of the root differs from such words for anger as *'anap*, *za'am*, and *qasap*, in that it emphasizes the "kindling" of anger, like the kindling of a fire, or the heat of the anger once started.

In the Niphal stem in Song of Solomon 1:6 the Shulamite [*sic*] bride says that the sons of her mother "were angry" (literally, "were kindled") with her.

3. What's the pun? In the previous line she says, "I am dark because the sun has burned my skin." Why was she exposed to the sun to such a degree? Because, "My brothers were burning with anger with me." Why? They did not approve of her relationship with the Shepherd and hoped to keep them separated by overworking her.
4. She brings this out in the two closing lines of the verse:

SOS 1:6c - [SW] "They made me keeper of the vineyards"

1. The word "keeper" is **נָטַר** *natar* and it has a double meaning. First of all it refers to those who keep guard over vineyards which is the obvious application here.
2. But it also is used in the sense of keeping one's anger or wrath. This indicates that she has been forced by the anger of her brothers to perform duties associated with guarding the vineyard.
3. In so doing she explains that she has not had time to tend to her own vineyard:

SOS 1:6d - [SW] "But I have not taken care of my own vineyard [**כֶּרֶם** *kerem*]."

1. Here the Shulammite uses a double entendre. Her first reference to the vineyard was literal and referred to the family business. Here she makes reference to something personal—her own sexuality.

Botterweck, G. Johannes, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry (eds.). *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*. Translated by David E. Green. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995), 7:324:



כֶּרֶם *kerem*. IV. Metaphorical Usage. 1. *Erotic Language.* (Song of Solomon) 1:6; 8:11f. are based on a pun involving the literal and metaphorical meaning of the word: on the one hand, “vineyard” denotes the plot of ground that needs to be guarded or yields its fruit; on the other, it denotes the female body and its sexual charms. In (Song of Solomon) 2:15, the stock metaphor includes the motif of (little) foxes as notorious destroyers of vineyards—obviously with some unexpected double meaning. In 1:14; 7:13, localization of the beloved or the setting of the love in a vineyard serves to create a poetic atmosphere.

The metaphorical usage of *kerem* to denote the female body is thus a particular instance of the common identification of women with fields and soil. The metaphorical use of “vineyard” has a counterpart in the use of “garden” to symbolize the bride in (Song of Solomon) 4:12-5:1; 6:2, 11; 7:13.

2. The Shulammitte with humor contends that because she is assigned management of the vineyard she is unable to tend to her own vineyard.
3. Her brothers’ efforts to keep her away from the Shepherd have succeeded in preventing her from marrying him. Her “vineyard” is ready to be “sown” and “bear fruit” yet she is denied this option.
4. She has passions and desires that must unnecessarily be restrained because of overly-protective brothers and in addition she is now faced with the challenge of guarding her own “vineyard” against Solomon’s advances.
5. Some principles emerge from this. First of all, when a young man and young woman identify their right opposite numbers the families should be supportive, not repressive.
6. However, one’s qualification for marriage involves more than simply the mutual recognition of soul compatibility and rapport. There must also be the capacity to fulfill the responsibilities of marriage.
7. For example, a young couple may correctly conclude they are right man-right woman. However, if the man is not able to support her then several problems emerge that would prevent them from entering into marriage until this situation is corrected.

Matthew 19:5 - “For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother and shall have sexual relations face to face with his own wife; and the two shall become one flesh.”

Both the man and the woman must separate from the households of their parents and form a new corporation within the divine institution of marriage called the home. If the man is unable to financially support his household then marriage should be put off until he can.

1 Timothy 5:8 - If anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.

8. There are in fact several reasons why people should not get married. Some of these apply to those who have made the correct decision that they are right for each other, while the presence of others sheds doubt that such a relationship exists.
9. The first we will note is extremely important: a believer is forbidden to marry an unbeliever:

1 Corinthians 9:5 - Do we apostles not have a right to take along a believing wife, even as the rest of the apostles, and the brothers of the Lord, and Peter?

2 Corinthians 6:14 - Stop being unequally bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness?

v. 15 - And what harmony has Christ with Lucifer, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever?



2 Corinthians 9:16 - What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, "I will dwell in them and walk among them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

v. 17 - "Therefore, once and for all come out from among them and once and of all be separate," says the Lord," and do not touch what is unclean; and I will strongly embrace you."

10. Another principle, almost as important and quite often ignored, is that no positive believer should ever marry another believer who does not recognize the necessity for spiritual growth or whose theology is markedly different from his or hers.

2 Thessalonians 2:15 - Therefore, fellow believers, stand fast and facilitate the traditions [**categories of doctrine**] which you have been taught by word or by our epistle.

2 Thessalonians 3:6 - Now we command you, fellow believers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you separate yourselves from every believer that is a slacker [**ἀτάκτως περιπατέω, ataktōs peripateō: one who lives a disorganized life**] which is not according to the tradition which he received from us.

11. The "tradition" spoken of in these two verses has to do with the systematic theology that was being taught by Paul and the other apostles.
12. There are some key principles of Christian theology that are critical to one's spiritual compatibility and rapport in marriage. If the person with whom you are involved is in disagreement about certain foundational doctrines then serious questions must arise as to whether this individual is right for you, at least until he or she willingly confirms these doctrines:
 - (1) Jesus Christ is both undiminished deity and true humanity in one Person forever. (Philippians 2:6-8)
 - (2) Salvation is accomplished through faith alone in Christ alone. (John 3:16)
 - (3) This faith is directed toward the Gospel revealed in Scripture: Jesus Christ was judged on the cross as a substitute for his sins, died physically, and was resurrected from the dead. (1 Corinthians 15:1-5)
 - (4) One's salvation cannot be subsequently lost nor can eternal life be rescinded. (2 Timothy 2:11-13)
 - (5) The Bible is inerrant and is the only source of God's message to mankind and thus the only revelation of how one must be saved. (John 20:31)