

## Song of Solomon 3:6-11

**Song of Solomon 3:6,7 What's this I see, approaching from the desert, raising clouds of dust, filling the air with sweet smells and pungent aromatics? Look! It's Solomon's carriage, carried and guarded by sixty soldiers, sixty of Israel's finest. (The Message)**

From 3:6 to 5:1 the Song describes that which is associated with the wedding of the couple whose story we have been following. Our passage, 3:6-11, uses the arrival of Solomon's entourage as the ultimate experience of pomp and circumstance and this is presented as the first stage of the ceremony. There are several issues in the translation... The consensus is that it should read, "Who's this (woman) I see... since the Hebrew is in the feminine. The alternative is to attach the carriage (a feminine noun) of verse seven to the pronoun in verse 6. The majority of commentators do not feel this is justified. There has been some evidence discovered for a tradition of a bride arriving for the wedding as here described in ancient Israel. So, the picture is of a groom waiting for the bride's arrival as we do when the bride comes down the aisle. Here, the dust kicked up by carriage and the marching men

is succeeded by the pungent perfumes worn by the bride. The groom is seen waiting, looking, anticipating, with the regal aura of a king, heart-full and bursting with joy.

In our contemporary world the ultimate in pomp and ceremony might be represented by British royalty. Whatever wedding traditions you hold or experience will be less than what they do over there. Choices that couples make around the wedding ceremony are significant. My parents chose a washer and dryer over a church wedding. I have a brother-in-law whose wedding began in a horse drawn carriage but the marriage only lasted a year. A nephew only knew his bride for a couple weeks before they ran off to get married in Las Vegas. There are a lot of ways to get married and the choices made around the wedding matter. The wedding should be a foundation for respect for the marriage but should not put the new couple at risk financially. Traditions with meaning should be respected but fanciful visions should probably be rethought. Above all, biblical morals should be observed by 1) waiting for marriage before coming together and 2) if you have come together, make a new beginning by submitting to God through marriage.

The vision of the bride approaching from the desert is suggestive of Israel's wilderness experience. It was then that Israel was won by God's attention and care. Perfumed with myrrh and frankincense suggests a temple sacrifice to be offered upon the altar in Jerusalem. A wedding in itself is an expression of devotion made by two toward each other with the effect of two "me's" becoming one "us".

Davis comments, "Modern liturgies of bread and wine may incorporate the words of the Apostle Paul, 'I appeal to you... to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.' Paul is of course speaking figuratively, as the term 'spiritual worship' signals. Paul means that God wants lives wholly offered up to God's service, not perfumed corpses on an altar. The Song is also speaking figuratively, evoking the scents of sacrifice - myrrh and frankincense- to image Israel's self offering to God... But the Song helps us to see something that goes beyond what Paul tells us. Namely this, when we come before God in true worship, God sees us not, as dutiful, but rather as beautiful, even irresistible, like a bride perfumed for her husband."