

“Return, return, O Shulamite”

Elizabeth Evans

“Nowhere in Scripture does the unspiritual mind tread upon ground so mysterious and incomprehensible as in this book, whereas saintly men and women throughout the ages have found it a source of pure and exquisite delight” (Introduction to the Song of Songs in the Scofield Bible).

FROM THE TIME when the sons of God sang together at Creation to the time when the sons of God of all ages will sing with their Lord there has been no greater song than the Song of Solomon. Hebrew scholars say there is no finer poetry, and many have tried to unravel its imagery, but surely to have a true understanding of this ‘voice of melody’ it is necessary to discover why it was written and for whom.

Solomon was the second King of peace, the beloved of the Lord, whose desire was for a hearing heart that he might shepherd the flock of Israel aright. He was given not only wisdom but also riches and honour, so there was none equal to him all his days (1 Kgs. 3). He made peace with all the surrounding nations, so acquiring seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines.

Sadly, when he was old, his wives turned away his heart from the living God because of their idolatry (ch. 11). Solomon’s observations in Ecclesiastes 7 are that they were all snares and nets, for he had not found wisdom among any of them, not one in a thousand (vv. 26-29).

But who, then, is this woman who had such a profound effect upon Solomon, someone who could speak his language? Is it possible from the words of the Song itself to discover her identity? She tells us in the first chapter that she is “black, but comely . . . as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon” (v. 5). She asks profound questions and is given wise answers. Solomon refers to her as a “prince’s daughter” (7:1), so she is a princess or even a queen; and he pleads with her to return, so she has gone away (6:13).

It is recorded that the Lord said concerning Abraham: “I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD” (Gen. 18:19). It is also recorded: “Then again Abraham took a wife, and her name was Keturah” (25:1). Six sons were born to them, but, because the inheritance

was Isaac’s, they were sent away to live in the east country. The second son, Jokshan, begat *Sheba* and *Dedan*.

When we put this information together in relation to the Song we have, perhaps, the key to unlocking the identity of the Shulamite woman and the reason why she made such an impact on Solomon. There was only one woman who was prepared to travel hundreds of miles from the “uttermost parts of the earth” (Mt. 12:42) because she thought the Kingdom had come; someone familiar with the covenants of truth and who loved the Lord Who had given them to Abraham; someone of royal birth coming with an abundance of precious gifts in a very great train: “And when the queen of Sheba . . . was come to Solomon, she communed with him of all that was in her heart” (1 Kgs. 10:1,2).

When Solomon had told the Queen of Sheba all things and shown her all his kingdom she was breathless with the wonder, for it was more than double all her expectation. She was moved to say: “Blessed be the LORD thy God, Which delighted in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel: because the LORD loved Israel for ever” (v. 9).

However, she realised that the glory of Solomon’s kingdom was only to be for a season; now was not the time for it to fill the whole earth. She would have to return home to shepherd her flocks and keep her vineyards: “And king Solomon gave unto the queen of Sheba all her desire . . . So she turned and went to her own country” (v. 13).

And so the king of Israel was inspired to write those sublime words, the song which goes on forever, so that all who recognise it for what it really is will see the reality of the Kingdom when the great King of righteousness and peace returns be joined to his Shulamite.¹

1. ‘Shulamite’ is the feminine form of the name Solomon.