



Wild Nature and Stable Maturity (continued)

1. Imagery: Wild vs. Harnessed

Rabbi Mosheh Lichtenstein, Shabbat Chol Ha-Moed Pesach: Shir haShirim, translated by David Strauss

<https://torah.etzion.org.il/en/shabbat-chol-ha-moed-pesach-shir-ha-shirim>

Whereas the element of time illustrates this point in a sharp but brief manner, the world of images that the two heroes of the story employ does this in a quiet and constant manner the entire length of the narrative. There is a clear difference between the ra'aya's world of images and that of the dod. The ra'aya's images are all taken from nature, from a world in which animals and plants grow wild and undisturbed, without limits, conventions or restraints. It is the nature of a plant to grow and spread out, and the nature of an animal to do whatever it pleases. The organic world is a world of extension and expansion, and it is in this world that the ra'aya's images establish her relationship with the dod. Her nature bursts out without limits or restraint, and therefore she identifies herself and her dod with this world. We shall offer two examples to illustrate this point: 1) "Like the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons" (2:3); 2) "My beloved is like a gazelle or a young hart" (2:9). In both cases, both the image taken from the plant kingdom and that borrowed from the animal kingdom, the emphasis is on movement and freedom. The inorganic world which lacks movement and growth, the raw material out of which artificial tools are created, the world that is like clay in the hands of the potter to form as he pleases, does not exist in the ra'aya's world of images. The entire length of the narrative, from the beginning of their relationship until the dod's knocking in the middle of the night, the ra'aya does not employ a single image taken from that which is made by human work.

The world of the dod, in contrast, is more complex. He does not aspire to silence his natural urges, but to control them. It is not an artificial world, in which restraint originates in the absence of life and vitality, but a world in which the living and beating heart is found in a reciprocal relationship with calculated reason. Therefore, the dod, when he turns to his beloved, makes use of images taken from both realms, and frequently employs metaphors that constitute an intentional mix of nature and human work. Thus, on the one hand, the dod turns to the ra'aya with the call: "Your two breasts are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle, which feed among the lilies" (4:5), while on the other hand, he also asserts that "Your cheeks would be comely with rows of jewels, your neck with strings of beads. We will make you necklets of gold studded with silver" (1:10-11). Another example of the integration of these two elements is found at the very beginning of the dod's words: "I compare you, O my love, to a mare of the chariots of Pharaoh" (1:9). While the horse is one of the striking symbols of natural, unrestrained energy [see end of Iyov, 39:19-25], and it is not by chance that the literary culture of the Wild West is connected to this noble animal, what we are dealing with here is the horse of a chariot. This is the same horse that is filled with tremendous energy, but that energy is harnessed and channeled for human use...

In truth, there is gradation and development in the words of the dod. The closer we are to the beginning of the book, when the love is still very unripe, the dod makes greater use of inanimate objects, but as the relationship develops and the connection matures, there is a transition to a greater use of natural images to the point that the poem recited immediately prior to his arrival at her house uses not a single inorganic image. The moment that love ripens and the time comes to actualize it, his litter that is guarded by sixty valiant men ceases to be an object that is fashioned out of the timbers of the Lebanon which turn into a palanquin, in which the love from among the daughters of Jerusalem must reside among pillars of silver, its back of gold. Now, even the dod proclaims in an excited and tremulous voice: "A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Levanon" (4:15), and immediately afterwards: "Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night" (5:2)...

In a dramatic turnabout from all that transpired previously, the ra'aya replaces her world of concepts and adopts for herself tools of expression and thought drawn from the spiritual world of the dod. As she pours out her heart following her loss, the dod is described in terms that are drastically different from her previous style. No longer an exclusively natural world, but a world that includes a significant artificial component. "His head is as the finest gold, his locks are wavy, and black as a raven... His lips are like lilies, dropping flowing myrrh. His hands are like rods of gold set with emeralds: his belly is polished ivory overlaid with sapphires. His legs are pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold: his countenance is like the Levanon, excellent as the cedars." (Shir ha-Shirim 5:12-15) Here, in the combination of flowing myrrh and rods of gold and the balance between the Lebanon forest and the polished ivory and pillars of

marble, the ra'aya learns the dod's secret and internalizes it into her own personality in an attempt to build a new relationship on a stronger foundation.

## Return to the Garden of Eden

### 2. Two recordings

- Dr. Yael Ziegler, <https://www.hatanakh.com/en/lessons/paradise-regained-return-gan-eden-shir-hashirim>
- And see Rabbi Moshe Taragin, <https://www.yutorah.org/lectures/lecture.cfm/965108/>

### 3. Dr. Yael Ziegler, The Garden of Eden: A Harmonious and Hierarchical Existence

	Bereishit 1-2	The Sin	The Punishment	Vayikra 26:3-13	Shir haShirim
Human > Plant	2:5-6 The mist 2:16 – Eat! 2:15 – “Serve”	Eating the prohibited fruit	3:17-19 The plants do not obey	26:4-5 The plants provide	2:11-13 The land is productive
Human > Animal	1:26 – Control 2:19 – Naming	The serpent’s subversion	3:15 Enmity for serpents	26:6 No dangerous beasts	?
Man-Woman	2:18-20 עזר כנגדו	Chavah gives Adam the fruit	3:16 To your husband is your longing, etc.	-	2:16, 6:3, 7:11 Reciprocal love
Gd > Human	2:16-17 Commands	Disobeying Gd	3:23-24 Exiled	26:3-13 We perform mitzvot & are protected	8:6 The punishment of Death is overcome by love

## Styles of Communication

### 4. Rabbi Moshe Taragin, <https://www.yutorah.org/lectures/lecture.cfm/882373/>

### 5. Distant communication highlights the gap

- Physical places Ein Gedi vs Jerusalem
- Imagery Country (1:5-7) vs. City (1:11)
- Third person 1:2 and 1:12
- Third party Daughters of Jerusalem, Guards, Description to third parties (3:6, 6:10, 8:5)

### 6. Ibn Ezra, Introduction to Shir haShirim

והנכון בעיני שהמשל הוא על אשה המדברת עם נפשה ותשיב אמריה לה (שופטים ה:כט) כאילו תאמר עם מחשבותיה, והן בנות ירושלים.  
It appears correct in my eyes that the parable is about a woman speaking to herself, and responding with her own statements, as though conversing with her own thoughts, and these are the daughters of Jerusalem.

### 7. Speaking without a listener

- Express uninhibited longing (2:8-9)
- Self-reassurance (2:16, 6:3, 7:11)
- Nostalgia for old happiness
- Remove the context of place and time

### 8. Rashi to Shir haShirim 1:2

זה השיר אומרת בפיה בגלותה ובאלמנותה מי יתן וישקני המלך שלמ' מנשיקות פיהו כמו מאז...

She speaks this song in her mouth in her exile and widowhood. “Would that King Solomon would kiss me of the kisses of his mouth, as He once did”...

## The Metaphor

### 9. Prof. Eliyahu Assis, **אהבת עולם אהבתיך**

#### 10. A lesson in love

- 1:1-8 The love is not yet ripe, she reaches out but is refused, there is no real bond yet  
1:9-2:17 They draw closer and sing of each other's beauty, he reaches out but she (weakly) refuses  
3:1-5:1 She longs for him and he is reticent, then he describes her lovingly and she reciprocates  
5:2-6:3 The relationship declines; she lacks motivation; there is deflected communication  
6:4-8:14 They pursue intimacy and praise each other, but they are not together

#### 11. Prof. Eliyahu Assis, **אהבת עולם אהבתיך**, pg. 208

אם לאחר כל שיא וכל תחושה של סיפוק מהאהבה יש שפל, האהבה היא אין סופית. ואם האהבה אין סופית, בניגוד למצופה הדלק העיקרי שלה אינו תחושת הסיפוק, אלא להפך, הערגה והתשווקה דוקא.

If after every peak and every sense of satisfaction from the love there is a trough, then the love is without end. And if the love is without end, then in contrast with what one would have expected, its central fuel is not a sense of satisfaction, but the opposite, it is specifically the yearning and longing.

## Summary

#### 12. Themes from our introduction

- Multiple compositions or a Single composition?
- King Solomon as the author –
  - Relationship with Hashem
  - Prophecy of our national future
  - Guide to wisdom
  - Guide to spiritual growth
  - Brilliant literary work
  - Matching events in Shlomo's life
- Re-translating the imagery to focus on the spiritual
- How the mundane outer layer serves the deeper messages

#### 13. Layer by layer

- Midrashim – Teaching Shir haShirim as a relentlessly positive message that Hashem still loves us, and in particular responding to Christian claims of supersessionism
- Rashi, Ibn Ezra, Rambam, Rav Soloveitchik – Our eternal and unbreakable national relationship with Hashem
- Rabbeinu Bahya, Rambam, Rabbeinu Bechaye – Our personal longing for Hashem
- Ralbag – A guide to attaining wisdom and understanding Hashem's universe
- Malbim – A guide to strengthening the spiritual and overcoming the material

#### 14. The images in the story help promote these themes

- The deer and the hart – The pursuit
- Lilies, Apples and Spices – Scent: The purest, most spiritual connection
- Time and natural/artificial imagery – Progression from passionate instability to stable love
- Harmony between Hashem/human/animal/plant - Returning to Gan Eden
- Indirect communication highlights distance
- Speech without a listener – Uninhibited, Self-reassurance, Nostalgia, Lack of setting

#### 15. A lesson in the nature of love