

Song of Solomon 1:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

If thou know not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents.

Analysis

The bridegroom responds to the bride's question: **If thou know not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents.** The address 'fairest among women' (yaphah banashim, יָפָה בְּנָשִׁים) affirms the bride's beauty and value even while gently redirecting her. The beloved doesn't rebuke her seeking but provides gracious guidance. The instruction **go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock** (iqvey hatson, עֲקֵי הַצֹּאן, footprints of the flock) suggests following the established paths where God's people have walked—the well-trodden ways of faith and obedience.

The phrase **feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents** encourages productive activity and community presence while waiting for fuller revelation. Rather than anxious seeking in wrong places, the bride should remain near the shepherding community, engaged in faithful work. Spiritually, this teaches that believers find Christ by following the paths of Scripture, staying near the Christian community, and engaging in faithful service rather than pursuing novel or isolated spirituality.

Historical Context

Ancient Palestinian shepherds established regular patterns and camping sites. Following the flock's footprints meant taking proven, safe routes to water and pasture. 'Shepherds' tents' represented community and established practice—the

gathered wisdom and safety of experienced shepherds. The bridegroom's counsel is both tender ('fairest among women') and practical (follow established paths). Early church fathers saw this as Christ directing seekers to the Church—follow the apostolic witness, remain within Christian community, engage in faithful discipleship. The Reformers emphasized Scripture and the gathered church as means of grace—don't seek private revelations apart from Word and community. The Puritans taught that spiritual growth occurs through ordinary means (Bible, prayer, fellowship, service) rather than extraordinary experiences. Modern readers see wisdom for resisting individualistic spirituality and embracing the communal, historical faith of God's people.

Related Passages

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. Are you following the 'footsteps of the flock'—the established paths of Scripture and historic Christian faith—or pursuing novel spiritual paths apart from community?
2. What 'kids' (responsibilities, callings) should you faithfully tend while waiting for greater spiritual clarity or Christ's fuller revelation?

Interlinear Text

אִם	לֹא	יָדָעִי	לֹא	הִפָּה	בִּנְשֵׁי יָם
H518	H3808	If thou know	H0	not O thou fairest	among women
		H3045		H3303	H802
צָאִי	לֹא	בְּעֵקֶב־י	הַצֹּאֵן	הָרְעִים:	אֶת גְּדִית יֶלֶד
go thy way forth	H0	by the footsteps	of the flock	and feed	thy kids
H3318		H6119	H6629	H7462	H1429
הָרְעִים:	מִשְׁכְּנֹתַי	וְעַל			
	H5921	' tents	and feed		
		H4908	H7462		

Additional Cross-References

Song of Solomon 6:1: Whither is thy beloved gone, O thou fairest among women? whither is thy beloved turned aside? that we may seek him with thee.

Song of Solomon 5:9: What is thy beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women? what is thy beloved more than another beloved, that thou dost so charge us?