

Song of Solomon 3:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not.

Analysis

The bride recounts a night of anxiety: 'By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not.' The phrase 'by night on my bed' suggests solitude, darkness, and vulnerability—perhaps physical nighttime or metaphorically a season of spiritual darkness and separation. The threefold use of 'sought' (Hebrew 'biqqashti,' בִּקַּשְׁתִּי) emphasizes earnest, persistent searching. The object of her search is 'him whom my soul loveth' (she'ahavah naphshi, שֶׁאֲהָבָה נַפְשִׁי)—not superficial attraction but deep soul-love. Yet despite seeking, 'I found him not'—the beloved remains elusive. This verse portrays love's anxiety when separated from the beloved, the soul's longing for communion, and the pain of perceived absence. It teaches that genuine love actively seeks, persists despite difficulty, and feels loss keenly. Spiritually, this represents the believer's experience of God's seeming hiddenness (Psalm 13:1; Isaiah 45:15). Dark nights of the soul test and purify faith, driving deeper seeking and more intense desire for God's presence. The bride's persistence anticipates Jesus's teaching: 'seek, and ye shall find' (Matthew 7:7).

Historical Context

Ancient Palestinian homes had simple sleeping arrangements—beds or mats in small rooms. Nighttime brought darkness, danger, and isolation in a world without electric lights or modern security. The bride's nighttime anxiety would resonate with original readers familiar with night's vulnerabilities. The Song here shifts from celebration (chapters 1-2) to crisis—separation, seeking, and longing. This

literary structure reflects real relationship dynamics: love includes both union and separation, presence and absence. Jewish mystical tradition (Kabbalah) employed this passage to describe Israel's longing for God during exile. Christian mystics (John of the Cross, Teresa of Avila) saw it describing the 'dark night of the soul'—seasons when God seems absent, testing and purifying the believer's love. The Puritans emphasized that God sometimes withdraws the sense of His presence to deepen dependence, increase longing, and prevent presumption. Modern readers can identify with both relational anxiety in human relationships and spiritual dryness in relationship with God.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. Have you experienced seasons of seeking God or a loved one but 'finding them not'—what did this experience teach you about the depth and authenticity of your love?
2. How does persistent seeking despite absence demonstrate genuine love, whether in marriage or in spiritual relationship with Christ?

Interlinear Text

עַל	מִשְׁכְּבִי	בַּלַּיִל	וְ	אֶת	הַ	שֶׁאֲהֶבָה	נַפְשִׁי
H5921	on my bed	By night		I sought	H853	loveth	him whom my soul
	H4904	H3915		H1245		H157	H5315
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	וְ	אֶת	הַ	שֶׁאֲהֶבָה	נַפְשִׁי	מִצָּאתִיו:	
	I sought	H3808	him but I found				
	H1245		H4672				

Additional Cross-References

1 Peter 1:8: Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:

Song of Solomon 5:6: I opened to my beloved; but my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone: my soul failed when he spake: I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer.

Song of Solomon 1:7: Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions?

Isaiah 55:6: Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near:

Isaiah 26:9: With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early: for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.

Psalms 22:2: O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent.

Song of Solomon 5:8: I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, that ye tell him, that I am sick of love.