

Song of Solomon 4:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet, and thy speech is comely: thy temples are like a piece of a pomegranate within thy locks.

Analysis

Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet (kesiphteyka kechut hashani, כְּשִׁפְתֵּחַ קְּחֻטָּה שָׁנִי—) —the comparison to scarlet thread celebrates the lips' vibrant color and delicate beauty. Scarlet dye, derived from insects, was expensive and prized, symbolizing royalty and value. **And thy speech is comely** (umidbarekh naveh, אַמִּדְבָּרִיךְ נָאוּה) affirms not just physical beauty but beautiful speech—eloquence, wisdom, gracious words. The beloved appreciates both appearance and character.

Thy temples are like a piece of a pomegranate within thy locks (kefelach harimon rakateykh, כְּפָלָח הָרִמוֹן רַקְאֵתָךְ—) —the temples (or cheeks) show the blush of modesty or health, like the red interior of pomegranates. The phrase "within thy locks" again suggests modest beauty—partially veiled yet glimpsed. This verse celebrates comprehensive beauty: lips (physical), speech (character), and temples (modesty). Church fathers saw Christ valuing His Church's witness (lips), confession (speech), and humble devotion (veiled temples).

Historical Context

Scarlet thread appears throughout Scripture: in the tabernacle (Exodus 26:1), marking Rahab's house (Joshua 2:18), and symbolizing sin's stain (Isaiah 1:18). Here it celebrates beauty rather than guilt—lips made beautiful, not stained. Pomegranates were symbols of fertility, abundance, and beauty in ancient Israel—decorating the temple (1 Kings 7:18) and the high priest's robe (Exodus 28:33-34).

The comparison celebrates the bride's healthy, rosy complexion. Early church tradition saw the Church's "scarlet lips" as her confession of faith, particularly martyrs who confessed Christ unto blood. The pomegranate's many seeds symbolized the Church's fruitfulness in producing believers. The Puritans emphasized that godly speech beautifies a person beyond physical appearance—gracious words reflect inner holiness.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does your speech reflect beauty or ugliness—do your words build up or tear down, spread grace or gossip?
2. What does it mean that Christ values your "comely speech"—your confession of faith and witness to His truth?
3. How can you cultivate both the beauty of outward presentation and the greater beauty of gracious, wise speech?

Interlinear Text

כַּפְרַת	נָאִי	לְחֵבֶד	נָאִי	הַשְׁנִי	שְׁפָתֹת	וְרָגְבָּרְתָּךְ
are like a thread	is comely	are like a piece	are like a piece	of scarlet	Thy lips	and thy speech
H2339	H5000	H6400	H6400	H8144	H8193	H4057

בְּקָרְבָּן	מִבְּעָד	בְּקָרְבָּן	לְצַפְתָּרָה
of a pomegranate	within	thy temples	thy locks
H7416	H1157	H7541	H6777

Additional Cross-References

Song of Solomon 6:7: As a piece of a pomegranate are thy temples within thy locks.

Joshua 2:18: Behold, when we come into the land, thou shalt bind this line of scarlet thread in the window which thou didst let us down by: and thou shalt bring thy father, and thy mother, and thy brethren, and all thy father's household, home unto thee.

Song of Solomon 5:16: His mouth is most sweet: yea, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.

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