

Song of Solomon 7:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Thine head upon thee is like Carmel, and the hair of thine head like purple; the king is held in the galleries.

Analysis

Thine head upon thee is like Carmel (רֹאשׁוֹךְ עָלֶיךָ כַּכְרִמָּה)—Mount Carmel was famous for its beauty, fertility, and majestic prominence on Israel's coast. Carmel means 'garden land' or 'fruitful field,' symbolizing abundance and splendor. The head represents leadership, dignity, and the culmination of the body. **And the hair of thine head like purple** (וְדֹלֶת רֹאשׁוֹךְ כַּאַרְגָּמָן)—purple dye was extremely expensive, extracted laboriously from murex shells. Only royalty could afford purple garments. The comparison elevates the bride's hair to royal status, precious and splendid.

The king is held in the galleries (מֶלֶךְ אֲסוּר בְּרֵהָטִים)—the Hebrew asur (אֲסוּר) means 'bound' or 'captivated.' The 'galleries' (rehatim, רֵהָטִים) may refer to flowing locks or channels. The bridegroom (the king) is captivated, held prisoner by love. The imagery celebrates love's power to voluntarily bind even royalty. Christ, the King of kings, is 'held captive' by love for His Church.

Historical Context

Mount Carmel was the site of Elijah's confrontation with Baal's prophets (1 Kings 18), demonstrating God's supremacy. Its beauty made it symbolic of Israel's restoration (Isaiah 35:2). Purple dye came from Phoenician coastal cities like Tyre, making it a luxury import associated with royalty and wealth (Acts 16:14). The phrase 'the king is held in the galleries' suggests the bridegroom willingly bound by the bride's beauty—love makes even kings vulnerable and captivated. Church

fathers saw Carmel as the Church's fruitfulness, purple as royal priesthood (1 Peter 2:9), and the king's captivity as Christ's voluntary self-giving love. The imagery teaches that covenant love creates mutual vulnerability and delight.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does the image of Christ the King being 'held captive' by love for His Church reveal the relational, voluntary nature of His commitment?
2. What 'royal' qualities (like purple—precious, beautiful, costly) should characterize your life as someone adopted into God's royal family?
3. In what ways can you cultivate the kind of character that is like Mount Carmel—fruitful, beautiful, majestic, and pointing to God's glory?

Interlinear Text

רֹאשׁ הַ	עַל יְהוָה	כְּכַרְמֵל ל	וְדֹלֵת	רֹאשׁ הַ
Thine head	H5921	upon thee is like Carmel	and the hair	Thine head
H7218		H3760	H1803	H7218
כְּצִוְנִי	מֶלֶךְ	אֲסוּר	בְּהֵטִים:	
like purple	the king	is held	in the galleries	
H713	H4428	H631	H7298	

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 35:2: It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the LORD, and the excellency of our God.

Song of Solomon 4:1: Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thou hast doves' eyes within thy locks: thy hair is as a flock of goats, that appear from mount Gilead.

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