

Song of Solomon 8:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

O that thou wert as my brother, that sucked the breasts of my mother! when I should find thee without, I would kiss thee; yea, I should not be despised.

Analysis

O that thou wert as my brother, that sucked the breasts of my mother! (הִי יִתְנַחֵם כְּאָח לִי יוֹנֵק שְׂדֵי אִמִּי)—the bride expresses longing for the freedom to show public affection without social constraint. In ancient culture, siblings could show physical affection publicly without scandal, but romantic couples faced restrictions. The Hebrew *mi yittenekha* (הִי יִתְנַחֵם, O that you were) expresses deep desire. **When I should find thee without, I would kiss thee; yea, I should not be despised** (אֶמְצְאָךְ בְּחוּץ אֶשְׁקֶךָ גַּם לֹא-יִבְזוּ לִי)—she longs to kiss him publicly without facing contempt (*yavuzu*, יִבְזוּ, they would despise/scorn).

This verse reveals the tension between deep love and social propriety. The bride doesn't wish her beloved were actually her brother (incest was forbidden), but wishes for the social freedom siblings enjoy. Church tradition saw this as believers longing for Christ's return when union with Him will be fully consummated and publicly celebrated. The 'kissing publicly without shame' anticipates the marriage supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:7-9).

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern culture had strict protocols governing public interaction between unmarried or unrelated men and women. Siblings could show familial affection publicly, but romantic couples faced restrictions to preserve modesty and prevent scandal. The bride's wish reflects her frustration with these social

constraints—her love is pure and covenantal, yet public expression risks judgment. Some scholars see this as pre-marital longing (if they're engaged but not yet wed), others as the constraints faced even by married couples in public. Church fathers interpreted this as the Church's longing for Christ's return when their relationship will be fully public and celebrated. The Puritans saw it as the believer's desire for unhindered communion with God.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. What social or cultural constraints make it difficult to express your love for Christ publicly, and how do you navigate them?
2. How does longing for Christ's return—when relationship with Him will be fully consummated—motivate your current faithfulness?
3. In what ways can you cultivate appropriate public witness to your relationship with Christ without shame or fear of contempt?

Interlinear Text

מִי H4310	אֶתְּנֶכָּה H5414	כָּאֵחַ H251	לִי H0	וְיָסָק H3243	שָׁדַי H7699
O that	thou wert as my brother		that sucked	the breasts	
אֵמִי H517	אֶמְצָאֲךָ H4672	בְּחוּץ H2351	אֶשָּׁק H5401	גַּם H1571	לֹא H3808
of my mother	when I should find	thee without	I would kiss		
	וְלֹא H936	לִי H0			
	thee yea I should not be despised				

Additional Cross-References

Zechariah 9:9: Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.

Galatians 4:26: But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.

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