

Solomon's Pick-Up Lines: Lips Like Scarlet Threads; Temples Like Pomegranates; Neck Like the Tower of David: Battlements, Merlons, & Embrasures, SOS 4:3-4

SOS 4:3 - [KS: Pick-Up Line #10] “Your lips are like a scarlet thread, and your mouth is lovely. **[KS: Pick-Up Line #11]** Your temples are like a slice of pomegranate behind your veil.”

1. Ripe pomegranates are quite good. A lady from California sent me several a few years ago in an effort to convince me of the fact. I tried them and they are very sweet but also tart.
2. A pomegranate is a multi-celled reddish berry that is about the size of an orange and its numerous seeds are covered with a pulpy crimson exterior that tastes sweet and tart at the same time.
3. When sliced, the numerous compartments that contain these red seeds present a beautiful symmetry of structure.
4. What Solomon is saying is that her forehead provides perfect symmetry for her face and its coloring reminds him of the pomegranate.
5. The word “temples” is important to note. It is the Hebrew word **רַקְעָה** *raqqah*. It can mean temples but also the brow. It may well be a synonym for **מֵצֶחֶת** *mesach*, that part of a person’s head between the eyebrows and hairline.
6. The way the Shulammite’s tresses fall around her face brings out the coloring of her temple and brow areas and contributes to the symmetry of her face which impresses Solomon.

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v. 4 - [KS: Pick-Up Line #12] “Your neck is like the tower of David, built with rows of stones on which are hung a thousand shields, all the round shields of the mighty men.”

1. To compare her neck to the tower of David is a complement whether it sounds like it or not. “Tower” is **מִגְדָּל** *migdal* and refers to siege towers built into the walls of a city. These were manned by soldiers who are identified in the New American Standard as members of David’s elite troops called the “Mighty Men.”
2. This reference does not mean *the* Mighty Men but all the brave warriors that served under David and who would defend the city when under siege. Why Solomon called upon this imagery to describe the Shulammite’s neck requires a little investigation.
3. The city of Tyre was an ancient Phoenician seaport on the Mediterranean Sea, located northwest of Palestine. Ezekiel prophesies the fall of Tyre and in so doing gives a synopsis of her rise to glory in:

Ezekiel 27:10 - “Persia and Lud [Ionia] and Put [African] were in your army, your men of war. They hung shield and helmet in you; they set forth your splendor.”

v. 11 - “The sons of Arvad \är' vad\ [**Island of the coast of Phoenicia**] and your army were on your walls, all around, and the Gammadim [גָמָדִים **gammathim: valorous men; warriors: the native troops of Tyre**] were in your towers. They hung their shields on your walls all around; they perfected your beauty.”

4. It is from this passage that we learn the custom where warriors would place their shields in the battlement's embrasures. In time of peace the shields expressed their presence and loyalty to the king they were committed to defend. In time of war they provided protection for archers to stand behind them leaving their hands free to draw the bow.
5. We are reminded of Paul's description of the Christian warrior's *panoplia* in Ephesians 6 where he admonishes the believer to put on the “full armor of God.” When he speaks of the shield he writes in:

Ephesians 6:16 - In addition to all these, having picked up and carried the shield of faith with which you shall have the ability to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.

6. The principal is there is no power possessed by Lucifer that can destroy the believer who is protected by his shield of faith.)
7. The phrase “built with rows of stones” is a metaphor that compares the merlons and embrasures of the battlement with the inlay of stones in a necklace. An analysis of this is provided by:

“Songs of Songs,” Translator’s Note 7 in *The Net Bible: New English Translation*. (Dallas: Biblical Studies Press, 2001), 1207:

בְנָה תַלְפִיּוֹת **banah talpiyoth** could be translated “built in rows (of stones) or “built in terraces.” Thus, the phrase refers to the outer walls of a tower built in spiraling rows of stones or built in terraces. This is a comparison of sight: she was wearing a strand of beads or necklaces wrapped around her neck like a tower built in spiraling rows or stones.

8. In addition to this Solomon describes how there are a “thousand shields” hung on these “stones.” Again we consult:

“Song of Songs,” Translator’s Note 8 in *The Net Bible*, 1207-8:

Scholars debate whether this refers to (1) the interior walls of a tower upon which warriors would hang their shields when not in use or (2) the external upper wall of a military fortress upon which warriors would hang their shields to add to their protection during battle. “The custom of hanging shields on the tower was symbolic of the warriors’ allegiance to and valor for a particular king. The fame of the tower of David has attracted soldiers to come and enter its service. The shields hanging there show that they have given their allegiance the tower. The (Shulammite’s) neck is like that tower. It is so beautiful that it could win the allegiance of a thousand heroic soldiers.” We could translate something like this: “Your neck attracts men as the tower of David attracts warriors. A thousand heroic soldiers would swear allegiance to your beauty.”

Most scholars suggest that it refers to the common practice in the ancient Near East of lining the top wall of a military fortress tower with shields, behind which the soldiers could stand for protection leaving both hands free for bow and arrows. Those who see this as the imagery all agree that the point of comparison is to jeweled necklaces with pendants which could be compared to shields. This is supported by the fact that Song 4:9 explicitly mentions a necklace with a multitude of jewels in it which she was wearing at this time. If we keep the idea that a multiple necklace is alluded to, then this should be a series of beads resembling round shields; below we should find something resembling either the short or the long side of building stones. Can necklaces of this type be found in the ancient Near East? It seems to the writer that the well-known sculpture from Arbos in Cyprus represents just this type of necklace. The upper beads do look like a row of round shields while the lower elements do evoke roughly bossed headers.

9. That the Shulammite owned such a necklace indicates that she acquired it either from her family or from the Shepherd. It also allows for the fact that she was allowed to go back to the estate and dress appropriately for traveling with the king and in doing so adorned herself with jewelry among her other accessories.
10. The imagery of the necklace indicates that it was a gift from the Shepherd. He is the one to whom she is loyal but at the same time it speaks of his commitment to defend her from aggressors such as Solomon. Figuratively, the shields speak of the Shepherd's protection of the Shulammite and the precious stones speak of the durability of his love for her.
11. These are principles of faith-rest that the believer possesses in his relationship with Christ. He is our shield of protection from all dangers, including paramours:

Psalm 144:2 - My lovingkindness and my fortress, my stronghold and my deliverer, my shield and He in whom I take refuge.