

# Hebrew Words for Love . . .

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*A message for young couples, married folks and those pursuing Yeshua*

I bet many of you have come to understand that I've developed quite an appreciation for the Hebrew language, and for fun, I re-visited the Song of Solomon to see how using the Hebrew words would alter my understanding of the Song.

If you've read my previous [study](#), you discovered that I have a slightly different view regarding the Song than many. For me it's as much a story—a poem—as it is an allegory of our pursuit of Yeshua as our Lover and King. Interestingly, young Hebrew boys weren't allowed to read the Song, because the images were considered too intense, too erotic.

So I wanted to take a quick look at the Song, but this time view it both from physical relationships—then how it relates to our pursuit of our Lover/King. You see, the Song of Songs, as it was most commonly known, gives us a series of pictures of the relationship between a man and a woman (and as a believer and their Messiah)—not just the joy of the relationship, but also the struggles and complexities. The two, this man and woman in the song, are experiencing a relationship that almost seems to have a life of its own.

What do I mean? Well, Song of Songs says in Song 2:7: “. . . Do not awaken or arouse love until it pleases!” What it's telling us is to not “awaken,” or more literally, do not excite or arouse—don't set it into motion. The idea here is to not stir up the fire of love, *prematurely*. It's like the maiden is saying, “You know, whatever this is, it's so good, it's so beautiful, we can't do anything to mess it up!”

I picture a couple in the beginning of their relationship and it's going good . . . then one of them (I'm being fair, usually it's the guy) begins to pressure the other to take “the next step . . .” I think you know what I mean. He says, “Hey, you *love* me don't you?”

You know, we play hot and loose with that word *love*. But in the Song of Songs, the concept of love is vastly different. It's sacred, beautiful, and mysterious. We tell people that we love them and in the same breath, we'll talk about how much we love a new car, or a certain pair of pants. I mean, I love my wife . . . and I also love tacos?

In the Hebrew language there's actually several words translated, *love*. One word is “raya.” Raya would be translated, literally, as a “friend,” or a “companion”—somebody you hang out with, a “soul mate.” We hear people say, “Wow, she's my best friend . . . I can tell her anything . . .” These are all expressions of raya. So the core of this relationship between these two lovers is friendship . . .

Another Hebrew word is “ba'ahavah.” Ba'ahavah is deep affection—that sense of desire to be with someone so much, your heart aches. Ba'ahavah is when your mind and your heart are bent toward your lover with such passion and intensity you can't think of anything else. It's when a couple sits together and can't imagine being anywhere else in the universe—but right there.

Every relationship begins as raya, and then, possibly grows to ba'ahavah. It doesn't always, many can remain at raya, and that's good. You don't need to force it to grow; you can't even hope it will grow. It just does . . . suddenly you wake up and realize, wow, I ba'ahavah her . . .

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How do you know when it's ba'ahavah? Well, the lovers in the Song of Songs, says, "The *ba'ahavah* is as strong as death. Surging waters cannot quench ba'ahavah; floodwaters cannot overflow it. If someone were to offer all his possessions to buy love (ba'ahavah), the offer would be utterly despised." You see, the whole context indicates the price or exchange in trading, like "Give me your vineyard in exchange for silver." Well, if someone offered to give her all their wealth in exchange for this devotion and love—just the mere offer would be utterly scorned.

Ba'ahavah is the love of the will. This one is a *whole lot* stronger than the fleeting romantic feelings of *raya*. This is much more than temporary urges. Ba'ahavah is making a decision to join your life to the life of another. This is an emotion that leads to commitment. Ba'ahavah is what makes the relationship last.

But then another Hebrew word translated love, is *dod* (pronounced dode). *Dod* is more literally translated as to "carouse," to "rock," or to "fondle." I think you get my point. *Dod* is the physical, sexual element to a relationship. The maiden exclaims, "Oh, how I wish you would kiss me passionately! For your *dod* is more delightful than wine." Proverbs says, "Let us drink deep of *dod* until morning." The maiden compares his *dod* (lovemaking) to the intoxicating effects of wine. We're told in Proverbs that a man is to be "intoxicated" with the *dod* of his wife. This is referring to the physical, sexual relationship in a marriage. This is where we get the word *eros*—erotic.

Picture three lighters, one lights up and you have your *raya* flame—the flame of friendship, of soul mates. Another lights up and you have your *ba'ahavah* flame—the flame of commitment, of joining your life to another. Light a final one and you have your *dod* flame—the flame of passion, intimacy, physical sexual relations. If you only have one burning all by itself, it will never be as hot as all the flames burning together. We were actually created for all the flames to burn as one.

So when this man and woman come together, all these flames combine. In Genesis Yehoveh talked about this as when this man and woman become one flesh, and this "one flesh" is way more than just physical acts. Their emotions, their hearts, their minds, their desires, their interests, experiences—it's a mingling of their souls. So this "coming together" physically becomes a picture of a deeper spiritual reality . . . our sexual acts are ultimately spiritual acts, something so beautiful, something so powerful that was meant to endure forever.

So, one flame—burning all by itself—can never be as hot as all the flames burning together. We were created for all the flames to burn as one. Think of all the ways we mess this up. Take an affair, for example. You've got two people who share the *dod* flame, without any of the other flames. Without the *raya*, without the *ba'ahavah*, there's no friendship, there's no commitment, there's no loyalty; no sacrifice. There's *dod*, but no *raya* or *ba'ahavah*. There's just two people, trying with the one flame—the *dod* flame, to get all the heat that you get for the three flames burning together. No wonder it leaves them empty and unfulfilled.

Or how about the couple that's been married for years, they're still together, there's still commitment, there's still some *ba'ahavah*, but be honest, there isn't much else. There's no friendship, there's no sex, they neglect the flames and they flicker, and they fade . . . and they go out.

When you separate the flames, it can never really satisfy. It's like you're living outside of how God wired you to live. Maybe our culture has no idea what true sexuality really is. When it comes to sex, maybe the world around us just doesn't get it.

True sexuality is vast and mysterious. It involves all of you. I mean, you have a body, but you also have a soul and a spirit. And love is two people coming together and giving all of themselves to each other—forever.

My prayer is that each of us will honor the way God created us; I pray we will have a profound sense of respect for the fact that we are deeply spiritual and mysterious beings, and that love is a deeply spiritual thing.

Remember that love is patient, love is kind, it's not envious. Love doesn't brag, it's not puffed up. It's not rude, it's not self-serving, it's not easily angered or resentful. It's not glad about injustice, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.

Next, how does all this relate to our pursuit of Yeshua? . . . Aah, that comes next . . .