

**The Daily Dose of the Good (and Not So Good) Worlds:
Breadcrumb trails and fairy ring fantasies
From Bishop Bishop**

As my loyal readers know, I aspire to send out The Daily Dose of the Good (and Not So Good) Words every day. Most days, I fail. But I continue to aspire. I get lost for a while and then I pull out my maps, find my bearings and figure out where the hell we're going to go next. We cannot go back; my breadcrumb trail got et up by critters. We must go forward into the Lust-Love Woods.

As promised in *What is Love?*, the first Vermon (video plus sermon) of 2009, I am dedicating the next handful or so of Daily Doses to the scriptural study of romance novels. I will take specific passages and analyze them, as if they were sacred texts, in a d'var torah sort of way. I will build meaning up from a scrap of scripture. I will look at overarching themes. I will search for the moral of these stories. I will seek out what these stories can and cannot tell us about lust and love.

In some ways, these next few Daily Doses are an extended parable, but instead of sowers and talents and mustard seeds, our parable stars hearts and parts and gossiping old biddies (female and male).

Now, it would be easy only to use romance novels as cautionary tales that tell us what not to do. And there is plenty of bad advice we should not take. Some would say that there is nothing redeeming to be found between the covers of "bodice rippers" and their sistren. But I would say there is much that is uplifting, in more than one sense. There are ideas, truths, threads, notions, stories, hopes, dreams and fantasies that can help us find our way through the dark, scary woods of Lust-Love.

Yes, often, these works mark out paths we don't, when in our right minds, want to follow. But sometimes, we follow those paths despite our better judgment and get lost in the Lust-Love Woods. It is nice to be reminded that we are not the only ones who used breadcrumbs to mark our way back. We all hate it when the story stars a sanctimonious sort that never does the wrong thing. We prefer to see someone flail and fail and finally, after much effort, find her way. It makes us feel less lonely. It reminds us that we all are fools for love . . . and lust. It tells us that we all get lost in the Lust-Love Woods, now and again. We all have wanted, at sometime or the other, to believe in happily ever after, fairy tale love.

I am not a true believer in romance. I do not hold to the notions of "soul mates" or "better halves" or "one love for all time." I do think that any love that lasts is mighty hard work. But I like a good old-fashioned infatuation story as much as the next person. There is something special, wondrous even, about the unfolding of lust, the budding of love. Just because it isn't the whole story doesn't mean it isn't true.

Following the fairy dust trails of infatuation through the Lust-Love Woods might bring a little magic back into our long-term partnerships, as long as we remember that we need to

avoid getting trapped in fairy ring circles of fantasy. We should, I think, step into those mushroom-circled fantasies, now and again.

Walk with me for a while. We will follow breadcrumb trails marked out by romance novels. We will get caught in lust dust showers. We will seek out and step in and then out of fanciful fairy circle fantasies of love. Follow me. Let's lose ourselves for a while in the Lust-Love Woods.