

THE SONG OF SONGS

Love songs^[heading inferred from subsequent page headings]

Bride [The Hebrew text implies, by its pronouns, different speakers, but does not indicate them; they are given, however, in two manuscripts of the Septuagint]

1¹I will sing the song of all songs to Solomon

²that he may [I will ... that he may: *or* The song of all songs which was Solomon's; may he] smother me with kisses.

Your love is more fragrant than wine,

³fragrant is [*Or* more fragrant than] the scent of your perfume, and your name like perfume poured out [poured out: *prob. rdg, Heb word uncertain*],

for this the maidens love you.

⁴Take me with you, and we will run together; bring me into your chamber, O king.

Companions

Let us rejoice and be glad for you;
let us praise your love more than wine,
and your caresses more than any song.

Bride

⁵I am dark but lovely, daughters of Jerusalem,
like the tents of Kedar
or the tent-curtains of Shalmah.

⁶Do not look down on me; a little dark I may be
because I am scorched by the sun.

My mother's sons were displeased with me,
they sent me to watch over the vineyards;
so I did not watch over my own vineyard.

⁷Tell me, my true love,
where you mind your flocks,
where you rest them at midday,
that I may not be left picking lice
as I sit among your companions' herds.

Bridegroom

⁸If you yourself do not know,
O fairest of women,
go, follow the tracks of the sheep
and mind your kids by the shepherds' huts.

⁹I would compare you, my dearest,
to Pharaoh's chariot-horses.

¹⁰Your cheeks are lovely between plaited tresses,
your neck with its jewelled chains.

Companions

¹¹We will make you braided plaits of gold
set with beads of silver.

Bride

¹²While the king reclines on his couch,
my spikenard gives forth its scent.

¹³My beloved is for me a bunch of myrrh
as he lies on my breast,

¹⁴my beloved is for me a cluster of henna-blossom
from the vineyards of En-gedi.

Bridegroom

¹⁵How beautiful you are, my dearest,
O how beautiful,
your eyes are like doves!

Bride

¹⁶How beautiful you are, O my love,
and how pleasant!

Bridegroom

Our couch is shaded with branches;
¹⁷the beams of our house are of cedar,
our ceilings are all of fir.

Bride

²¹I am an asphodel in Sharon,
a lily growing in the valley.

Bridegroom

²No, a lily among thorns
is my dearest among girls.

Bride

³Like an apricot-tree among the trees of the wood,
so is my beloved among boys.

To sit in its shadow was my delight,
and its fruit was sweet to my taste.

⁴He took me into the wine-garden
and gave me loving glances.

⁵He refreshed me with raisins, he revived me with apricots;
for I was faint with love.

⁶His left arm was under my head, his right arm was round me.

Bridegroom

⁷I charge you, daughters of Jerusalem,
by the spirits and the goddesses [by ... goddesses: *or* by the gazelles and
the hinds] of the field:

Do not rouse her, do not disturb my love
until she is ready [until ... ready: *or* while she is resting].

Bride

⁸Hark! My beloved! Here he comes,
bounding over the mountains, leaping over the hills.

⁹My beloved is like a gazelle
or a young wild goat:
there he stands outside our wall,
peeping in at the windows, glancing through the lattice.

¹⁰My beloved answered, he said to me:
Rise up, my darling;
my fairest, come away.

¹¹For now the winter is past,
the rains are over and gone;

¹²the flowers appear in the country-side;
the time is coming when the birds will sing,
and the turtle-dove's cooing will be heard in our land;

¹³when the green figs will ripen on the fig-trees
and the vines [*prob. rdg, Heb adds blossom*] give forth their fragrance.
Rise up, my darling;
my fairest, come away.

Bridegroom

¹⁴My dove, that hides in holes in the cliffs
or in crannies on the high ledges,
let me see your face, let me hear your voice;
for your voice is pleasant, your face is lovely.

Companions

¹⁵Catch for us the jackals, the little jackals [*Or fruit-bats*],
that spoil our vineyards, when the vines are in flower.

Bride

¹⁶My beloved is mine and I am his;
he delights in the lilies.

¹⁷While the day is cool and the shadows are dispersing,
turn, my beloved, and show yourself
a gazelle or a young wild goat
on the hills where cinnamon grows [on ... grows: *or* on the rugged hills *or* on
the hills of Bethel].

3¹Night after night on my bed
I have sought my true love;
I have sought him but not found him,
I have called him but he has not answered.

²I said, 'I will rise and go the rounds of the city,
through the streets and the squares,

seeking my true love.'

I sought him but I did not find him,

I called him but he did not answer.

³The watchmen, going the rounds of the city, met me,
and I asked, 'Have you seen my true love?'

⁴Scarcely had I left them behind me
when I met my true love.

I seized him and would not let him go
until I had brought him to my mother's house,
to the room of her who conceived me.

Bridegroom

⁵I charge you, daughters of Jerusalem,
by the spirits and the goddesses [by ... goddesses: *or* by the gazelles and
the hinds] of the field:

Do not rouse her, do not disturb my love
until she is ready [until ... ready: *or* while she is resting].

Companions

⁶What is this coming up from the wilderness
like a column of smoke
from burning myrrh or frankincense,
from all the powdered spices that merchants bring?

⁷Look; it is Solomon carried in his litter;
sixty of Israel's chosen warriors
are his escort,

⁸all of them skilled swordsmen,
all trained to handle arms,
each with his sword ready at his side
to ward off the demon of the night.

⁹The palanquin which King Solomon had made for himself
was of wood from Lebanon.

¹⁰Its poles he had made of silver,
its head-rest of gold;
its seat was of purple stuff,
and its lining was of leather.

¹¹Come out, daughters of Jerusalem;
you daughters of Zion, come out and welcome King Solomon,
wearing the crown with which his mother has crowned him,
on his wedding day, on his day of joy.

Bridegroom

4¹How beautiful you are, my dearest, how beautiful!
Your eyes behind your veil are like doves,
your hair like a flock of goats streaming down Mount Gilead.

²Your teeth are like a flock of ewes just shorn
which have come up fresh from the dipping;

each ewe has twins and none has cast a lamb.

³Your lips are like a scarlet thread,
and your words are delightful [*Or and your mouth is lovely*];
your parted lips behind your veil
are like a pomegranate cut open.

⁴Your neck is like David's tower,
which is built with winding courses;
a thousand bucklers hang upon it,
and all are warriors' shields.

⁵Your two breasts are like two fawns,
twin fawns of a gazelle [*prob. rdg, Heb adds which delight in the lilies*].

⁶While the day is cool and the shadows are dispersing,
I will go to the mountains of myrrh
and to the hills of frankincense.

⁷You are beautiful, my dearest,
beautiful without a flaw.

⁸Come from Lebanon, my bride;
come with me from Lebanon.
Hurry down from the top of Amana,
from Senir's top and Hermon's,
from the lions' lairs, and the hills the leopards haunt.

⁹You have stolen my heart [*stolen my heart: or put heart into me*], my
sister,
you have stolen it [*stolen it: or put heart into me*], my bride,
with one of your eyes, with one jewel of your necklace.

¹⁰How beautiful are your breasts, my sister, my bride!
Your love is more fragrant than wine,
and your perfumes sweeter than any spices.

¹¹Your lips drop sweetness like the honeycomb, my bride,
syrup and milk are under your tongue,
and your dress has the scent of Lebanon.

¹³[*v12 transposed to follow v14*]Your two cheeks [*Your two cheeks: prob. rdg, Heb Your shoots*] are an orchard of pomegranate
an orchard full of rare fruits [*prob. rdg, Heb adds henna with spikenard*]:

¹⁴spikenard and saffron, sweet-cane and cinnamon
with every incense-bearing tree,
myrrh and aloes
with all the choicest spices.

¹²My sister, my bride, is a garden close-locked,
a garden close-locked, a fountain sealed.

Bride

¹⁵The fountain in my garden [*my garden: prob. rdg, Heb gardens*] is a
spring of running water
pouring down from Lebanon.

¹⁶Awake, north wind, and come, south wind;
blow upon my garden that its perfumes may pour forth,

that my beloved may come to his garden
and enjoy its rare fruits.

Bridegroom

5¹I have come to my garden, my sister and bride,
and have plucked my myrrh with my spices;
I have eaten my honey and my syrup,
I have drunk my wine and my milk.
Eat, friends, and drink,
until you are drunk with love.

Bride

2I sleep but my heart is awake.
Listen! My beloved is knocking:

'Open to me, my sister, my dearest,
my dove, my perfect one;
for my head is drenched with dew,
my locks with the moisture of the night.'

3¹I have stripped off my dress; must I put it on again?
I have washed my feet; must I soil them again?'

4When my beloved slipped his hand through the latch-hole,
my bowels stirred within me.

5When I arose to open for my beloved,
my hands dripped with myrrh;
the liquid myrrh from my fingers
ran over the knobs of the bolt.

6With my own hands I opened to my love,
but my love had turned away and gone by;
my heart sank when he turned his back.
I sought him but I did not find him,
I called him but he did not answer.

7The watchmen, going the rounds of the city, met me;
they struck me and wounded me;
the watchmen on the walls took away my cloak.

8I charge you, daughters of Jerusalem,
if you find my beloved, will you not tell him [will you ... him: *or what will you
tell him?*]
that I am faint with love?

Companions

9What is your beloved more than any other,
O fairest of women?
What is your beloved more than any other,
that you give us this charge?

Bride

¹⁰My beloved is fair and ruddy,
a paragon among ten thousand.
¹¹His head is gold, finest gold;
his locks are like palm-fronds [*prob. rdg, Heb adds black as the raven*].
¹²His eyes are like doves beside brooks of water,
splashed by the milky water
as they sit where it is drawn.
¹³His cheeks are like beds of spices or chests full of perfumes;
his lips are lilies, and drop liquid myrrh;
¹⁴his hands are golden rods set in topaz;
his belly a plaque of ivory overlaid with lapis lazuli.
¹⁵His legs are pillars of marble in sockets of finest gold;
his aspect is like Lebanon, noble as cedars.
¹⁶His whispers are [*Or His nature is*] sweetness itself, wholly desirable.
Such is my beloved, such is my darling,
daughters of Jerusalem.

Companions

6¹Where has your beloved gone,
O fairest of women?
Which way did your beloved go,
that we may help you to seek him?

Bride

²My beloved has gone down to his garden,
to the beds where balsam grows,
to delight in the garden [*prob. rdg, Heb gardens*] and to pick the lilies.
³I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine,
he who delights in the lilies.

Bridegroom

⁴You are beautiful, my dearest, as Tirzah,
lovely as Jerusalem [*prob. rdg, Heb adds majestic as the starry heavens (see v10)*].
⁵Turn. your eyes away from me;
they dazzle me.
Your hair is like a flock of goats streaming down Mount Gilead;
⁶your teeth are like a flock of ewes come up fresh from the dipping,
each ewe has twins and none has cast a lamb.
⁷Your parted lips behind your veil
are like a pomegranate cut open.
⁸There may be sixty princesses,
eighty concubines, and young women past counting,
⁹but there is one alone, my dove, my perfect one,
her mother's only child,
devoted to the mother who bore her;
young girls see her and call her happy,
princesses and concubines praise her.

¹⁰Who is this that looks out like the dawn,
beautiful as the moon, bright as the sun,
majestic as the starry heavens?

¹¹I went down to a garden of nut-trees
to look at the rushes by the stream,
to see if the vine had budded
or the pomegranates were in flower.

¹²I did not know myself;
she made me feel more than a prince
reigning over the myriads [*prob. rdg, Heb chariots*] of his people.

Companions

¹³Come back, come back, Shulammite maiden,
come back, that we may gaze upon you.

Bridegroom

How you love to gaze on the Shulammite maiden,
as she moves between the lines of dancers!

7¹How beautiful are your sandalled feet, O prince's daughter!
The curves of your thighs are like jewels,
the work of a skilled craftsman.

²Your navel is a rounded goblet
that never shall want for spiced wine.
Your belly is a heap of wheat
fenced in by lilies.

³Your two breasts are like two fawns,
twin fawns of a gazelle.

⁴Your neck is like a tower of ivory.
Your eyes are the pools in Heshbon,
beside the gate of the crowded city [*Or the gate of Beth-rabbim*].
Your nose is like towering Lebanon
that looks towards Damascus.

⁵You carry your head like Carmel;
the flowing hair on your head is lustrous black,
your tresses are braided with ribbons.

⁶How beautiful, how entrancing you are,
my loved one, daughter of delights!

⁷You are stately as a palm-tree,
and your breasts are the clusters of dates.

⁸I said, 'I will climb up into the palm
to grasp its fronds.'

May I find your breasts like clusters of grapes on the vine,
the scent of your breath like apricots,

⁹and your whispers like spiced wine
flowing smoothly to welcome my caresses,
gliding down through lips and teeth.

Bride

¹⁰I am my beloved's, his longing is all for me.

¹¹Come, my beloved, let us go out into the fields
to lie among the henna-bushes;

¹²let us go early to the vineyards
and see if the vine has budded or its blossom opened,
if the pomegranates are in flower.

There will I give you my love,

¹³when the mandrakes give their perfume,
and all rare fruits are ready at our door,
fruits new and old
which I have in store for you, my love.

8¹If only you were my own true brother
that sucked my mother's breasts!
Then, if I found you outside, I would kiss you,
and no man would despise me.

²I would lead you to the room of the mother who bore me,
bring you to her house for you to embrace me [for you to embrace me: *or to*
teach me how to love you];

I would give you mulled wine to drink
and the fresh juice of pomegranates,

³your [*Prob, rdg, Heb his*] left arm under my head and your [*Prob, rdg, Heb*
his] right arm round me.

Bridegroom

⁴I charge you, daughters of Jerusalem:
Do not rouse her, do not disturb my love
until she is ready [until ... ready: *or while she is resting*].

Companions

⁵Who is this coming up from the wilderness
leaning on her beloved?

Bridegroom

Under the apricot-trees I roused you,
there where your mother was in labour with you,
there where she who bore you was in labour.

⁶Wear me as a seal upon your heart,
as a seal upon your arm;
for love is strong as death,
passion cruel as the grave;
it blazes up like blazing fire,
fiercer than any flame.

⁷Many waters cannot quench love,
no flood can sweep it away;
if a man were to offer for love
the whole wealth of his house,
it would be utterly scorned.

Companions

⁸We have a little sister
who has no breasts;
what shall we do for our sister
when she is asked in marriage?

⁹If she is a wall,
we will build on it a silver parapet,
but [*Or and*] if she is a door,
we will close it up with planks of cedar.

Bride

¹⁰I am a wall and my breasts are like towers;
so in his eyes I am as one who brings contentment.

¹¹Solomon has a vineyard at Baal-hamon;
he has let out his vineyard to guardians,
and each is to bring for its fruit
a thousand pieces of silver.

¹²But my vineyard is mine to give;
the thousand pieces are yours, O Solomon,
and the guardians of the fruit shall have two hundred.

Bridegroom

¹³My bride, you who sit in my garden,
what is it that my friends [*my garden ... friends: prob. rdg, Heb the gardens, friends*] are listening to?
Let me also hear your voice.

Bride

¹⁴Come into the open, my beloved,
and show yourself like a gazelle or a young wild goat
on the spice-bearing mountains.