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]

1 I will sing the song of all songs to Solomon
2 that 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,
3 fragrant 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.
4 Take 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

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

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

9 I would compare you, my dearest,
to Pharaoh’s chariot-horses.
10 Your cheeks are lovely between plaited tresses,
your neck with its jewelled chains.
Companions

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

Bride

12 While the king reclines on his couch, my spikenard gives forth its scent.
13 My beloved is for me a bunch of myrrh as he lies on my breast,
14 my beloved is for me a cluster of henna-blossom from the vineyards of En-gedi.

Bridegroom

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

Bride

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

Bridegroom

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

Bride

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

Bridegroom

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

Bride

3 Like 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.
4 He took me into the wine-garden and gave me loving glances.
5 He refreshed me with raisins, he revived me with apricots; for I was faint with love.
6 His left arm was under my head, his right arm was round me.

Bridegroom

7 I 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

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

10 My beloved answered, he said to me:
Rise up, my darling;
my fairest, come away.
11 For now the winter is past,
the rains are over and gone;
12 the 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;
13 when 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

14 My 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

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

Bride

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

31 Night 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.
2 I 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.

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

4 Scarcely 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

5 I 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

6 What 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?

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

9 The palanquin which King Solomon had made for himself
was of wood from Lebanon.
10 Its poles he had made of silver,
its head-rest of gold;
its seat was of purple stuff,
and its lining was of leather.

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

Bridegroom

4 1 How 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.
2 Your 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

5\(^{1}\) I 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

2\(^{2}\) I 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.’

3\(^{3}\) I have stripped off my dress; must I put it on again?
I have washed my feet; must I soil them again?’

4\(^{4}\) When my beloved slipped his hand through the latch-hole,
my bowels stirred within me.
5\(^{5}\) When 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.
6\(^{6}\) With 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.
7\(^{7}\) The watchmen, going the rounds of the city, met me;
they struck me and wounded me;
the watchmen on the walls took away my cloak.
8\(^{8}\) I 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

9\(^{9}\) What 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?
My beloved is fair and ruddy,  
a paragon among ten thousand.  
His head is gold, finest gold;  
his locks are like palm-fronds [prob. rdg, Heb adds black as the raven].  
His eyes are like doves beside brooks of water,  
splashed by the milky water  
as they sit where it is drawn.  
His cheeks are like beds of spices or chests full of perfumes;  
his lips are lilies, and drop liquid myrrh;  
his hands are golden rods set in topaz;  
his belly a plaque of ivory overlaid with lapis lazuli.  
His legs are pillars of marble in sockets of finest gold;  
his aspect is like Lebanon, noble as cedars.  
His whispers are [Or His nature is] sweetness itself, wholly desirable.  
Such is my beloved, such is my darling,  
daughters of Jerusalem.

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

Bride
2 My 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.  
3 I am my beloved’s, and my beloved is mine,  
he who delights in the lilies.

Bridegroom
4 You are beautiful, my dearest, as Tirzah,  
lovely as Jerusalem [prob. rdg, Heb adds majestic as the starry heavens (see v10)].  
5 Turn. your eyes away from me;  
they dazzle me.  
Your hair is like a flock of goats streaming down Mount Gilead;  
your teeth are like a flock of ewes come up fresh from the dipping,  
each ewe has twins and none has cast a lamb.  
Your parted lips behind your veil  
are like a pomegranate cut open.  
8 There may be sixty princesses,  
eighty concubines, and young women past counting,  
but 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.
10 Who is this that looks out like the dawn, beautiful as the moon, bright as the sun, majestic as the starry heavens?

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

Companions

13 Come 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!

7 How beautiful are your sandalled feet, O prince’s daughter! The curves of your thighs are like jewels, the work of a skilled craftsman.
2 Your navel is a rounded goblet that never shall want for spiced wine. Your belly is a heap of wheat fenced in by lilies.
3 Your two breasts are like two fawns, twin fawns of a gazelle.
4 Your 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.
5 You carry your head like Carmel; the flowing hair on your head is lustrous black, your tresses are braided with ribbons.
6 How beautiful, how entrancing you are, my loved one, daughter of delights!
7 You are stately as a palm-tree, and your breasts are the clusters of dates.
8 I 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, and your whispers like spiced wine flowing smoothly to welcome my caresses, gliding down through lips and teeth.
Bride

10 I am my beloved’s, his longing is all for me.
11 Come, my beloved, let us go out into the fields
to lie among the henna-bushes;
12 let 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,
13 when 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.

8 1 If 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.
2 I 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,
3 your [Prob, rdg, Heb his] left arm under my head and your [Prob, rdg, Heb
his] right arm round me.

Bridegroom

4 I 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

5 Who 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.
6 Wear 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.
7 Many 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

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

10 I am a wall and my breasts are like towers; so in his eyes I am as one who brings contentment.
11 Solomon 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.
12 But my vineyard is mine to give; the thousand pieces are yours, O Solomon, and the guardians of the fruit shall have two hundred.

Bridegroom

13 My 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

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