

Song of Songs



This book is a collection of poems in which a man and a woman describe the joy and ecstasy of their love for one another. It has been understood both as a picture of God's love for Israel and of Christ's love for the Church.

Love Is Better than Wine

1 This is Solomon's
most beautiful song.

She Speaks:

- 2** Kiss me tenderly!
Your love is better than wine,
3 and you smell so sweet.
All the young women adore you;
the very mention of your name
is like spreading perfume.
***4** Hurry, my king! Let's hurry.
5 Take me to your home.

The Young Women Speak:

We are happy for you!
And we praise your love
even more than wine.

She Speaks:

- Young women of Jerusalem,
it is only right
that you should adore him.
My skin is dark and beautiful,
like a tent in the desert
or like Solomon's curtains.
6 'Don't stare at me'
just because the sun
has darkened my skin.

My brothers were angry with me;
they made me work in the vineyard,
and so I neglected
my complexion.

Don't let the other shepherds
think badly of me.

7 'I'm not one of those women
who shamelessly follow
after shepherds.'

My darling, I love you!
Where do you feed your sheep
and let them rest at noon?

He Speaks:

8 My dearest, if you don't know,
just follow the path
of the sheep.

Then feed your young goats
near the shepherds' tents.

9 You move as gracefully
as the pony that leads
the chariot of the king.

10 Earrings add to your beauty,
and you wear a necklace
of precious stones.

11 Let's make you some jewelry
of gold, woven with silver.

She Speaks:

12 My king, while you

were on your couch,
my love was a magic charm.

- ¹³ My darling, you are perfume
between my breasts;
¹⁴ you are flower blossoms
from the gardens of En-Gedi.

He Speaks:

- ¹⁵ My darling, you are lovely,
so very lovely—
your eyes are those of a dove.

She Speaks:

- ¹⁶ My love, you are handsome,
truly handsome—
the fresh green grass
will be our wedding bed
¹⁷ in the shade of cedar
and cypress trees.

Love Makes Everything Beautiful

She Speaks:

- 2** I am merely a rose
from the land of Sharon,
a lily from the valley.

He Speaks:

- ² My darling, when compared
with other young women,
you are a lily among thorns.

She Speaks:

- ³ And you, my love,
are an apple tree
among trees of the forest.
Your shade brought me pleasure;
your fruit was sweet.
⁴ You led me to your banquet room
and showered me with love.
⁵ Refresh and strengthen me
with raisins and apples.
I am hungry for love!
⁶ Put your left hand under my head
and embrace me
with your right arm.
⁷ Young women of Jerusalem,
promise me by the power
of deer and gazelles
never to awaken love
before it is ready.

Winter Is Past

She Speaks:

- ⁸ I hear the voice
of the one I love,

as he comes leaping
over mountains and hills
⁹ like a deer or a gazelle.
Now he stands outside our wall,
looking through the window
¹⁰ and speaking to me.

He Speaks:

- My darling, I love you!
Let's go away together.
¹¹ Winter is past,
the rain has stopped;
¹² flowers cover the earth,
it's time to sing.▷
The cooing of doves
is heard in our land.
¹³ Fig trees are bearing fruit,
while blossoms on grapevines
fill the air with perfume.
My darling, I love you!
Let's go away together.
¹⁴ You are my dove
hiding among the rocks
on the side of a cliff.
Let me see how lovely you are!
Let me hear the sound
of your melodious voice.
¹⁵ 'Our vineyards are in blossom;
we must catch the little foxes
that destroy the vineyards.'

She Speaks:

- ¹⁶ My darling, I am yours,
and you are mine,
as you feed your sheep
among the lilies.
¹⁷ Pretend to be a young deer
dancing on 'mountain slopes'
until daylight comes
and shadows fade away.

Beautiful Dreams

She Speaks:

- 3** While in bed at night,
I reached for the one I love
with heart and soul.
I looked for him,
but he wasn't there.
² So I searched through the town
for the one I love.
I looked on every street,
but he wasn't there.
³ I even asked the guards
patrolling the town,

- 'Have you seen the one
I love so much?'"
- 4 Right after that, I found him.
I held him and would not let go
until I had taken him
to the home of my mother.
- 5 Young women of Jerusalem,
promise me by the power
of deer and gazelles,
never to awaken love
before it is ready.

The Groom and the Wedding Party

Their Friends Speak:

- 6 What do we see approaching
from the desert
like a cloud of smoke?
With it comes the sweet smell
of spices, including myrrh
and frankincense.
- 7 It is King Solomon
carried on a throne,
surrounded by sixty
of Israel's best soldiers.
- 8 Each of them wears a sword.
They are experts at fighting,
even in the dark.
- 9 The throne is made of trees
from Lebanon.
- 10 Its posts are silver,
the back is gold,
and the seat is covered
with purple cloth.
You women of Jerusalem
have taken great care
to furnish the 'inside.'
- 11 Now come and see the crown
given to Solomon by his mother
on his happy wedding day.

What a Beautiful Bride

He Speaks:

- 4 My darling, you are lovely,
so very lovely—
as you look through your veil,
your eyes are those of a dove.
Your hair tosses about
as gracefully as goats
coming down from Gilead.
- 2 Your teeth are whiter
than sheep freshly washed;
they match perfectly,
not one is missing.

- 3 Your lips are crimson cords,
your mouth is shapely;
behind your veil are hidden
'beautiful rosy cheeks.'
- 4 Your neck is more graceful
than the tower of David,
decorated with thousands
of warriors' shields.
- 5 Your breasts are perfect;
they are twin deer
feeding among lilies.
- 6 I will hasten to those hills
sprinkled with sweet perfume
and stay there till sunrise.
- 7 My darling, you are lovely
in every way.
- 8 My bride, together
we will leave Lebanon!
We will say goodbye
to the peaks of Mount Amana,
Senir, and Hermon,
where lions and leopards
live in the caves.
- 9 My bride, my very own,
you have stolen my heart!
With one glance from your eyes
and the glow of your necklace,
you have stolen my heart.
- 10 Your love is sweeter than wine;
the smell of your perfume
is more fragrant than spices.
- 11 Your lips are a honeycomb;
milk and honey
flow from your tongue.
Your dress has the aroma
of cedar trees from Lebanon.
- 12 My bride, my very own,
you are a garden, a fountain
closed off to all others.
- 13 'Your arms' are vines,
covered with delicious fruits
and all sorts of spices—
henna, nard, ¹⁴ saffron,
calamus, cinnamon,
frankincense, myrrh, and aloe
—all the finest spices.
- 15 You are a spring in the garden,
a fountain of pure water,
and a refreshing stream
from Mount Lebanon.

She Speaks:

¹⁶ Let the north wind blow,
the south wind too!
Let them spread the aroma
of my garden,
so the one I love
may enter and taste
its delicious fruits.

He Speaks:

5 My bride, my very own,
I come to my garden
and enjoy its spices.
I eat my honeycomb and honey;
I drink my wine and milk.

Their Friends Speak:

Eat and drink until
you are drunk with love.

Another Dream

She Speaks:

² I was asleep, but dreaming:
The one I love was at the door,
knocking and saying,
"My darling, my very own,
my flawless dove,
open the door for me!
My head is drenched
with evening dew."

³ But I had already undressed
and bathed my feet.
Should I dress again
and get my feet dirty?

⁴ Then my darling's hand
reached to open the latch,
and my heart stood still.

⁵ When I rose to open the door,
my hands and my fingers
dripped with perfume.

⁶ My heart stood still
while he spoke to me,
but when I opened the door,
my darling had disappeared.
I searched and shouted,
but I could not find him —
there was no answer.

⁷ Then I was found by the guards
patrolling the town
and guarding the wall.
They beat me up
and stripped off my robe.

⁸ Young women of Jerusalem,
if you find the one I love,
please say to him,
"She is weak with desire."

Their Friends Speak:

⁹ Most beautiful of women,
why is the one you love
more special than others?
Why do you ask us
to tell him how you feel?

She Speaks:

¹⁰ He is handsome and healthy,
the most outstanding
among ten thousand.

¹¹ His head is purest gold;
his hair is wavy,
black as a raven.

¹² His eyes are a pair of doves
bathing in a stream
flowing with milk.¹

¹³ His face is a garden
of sweet-smelling spices;
his lips are lilies
dripping with perfume.

¹⁴ His arms are branches of gold
covered with jewels;
'his body is ivory'
decorated with sapphires.

¹⁵ His legs are columns of marble
on feet of gold.
He stands there majestic
like Mount Lebanon
and its choice cedar trees.

¹⁶ His kisses are sweet.
I desire him so much!
Young women of Jerusalem,
he is my lover and friend.

Their Friends Speak:

6 Most beautiful of women,
tell us where he has gone.
Let us help you find him.

She Speaks:

² My darling has gone down
to his garden of spices,
where he will feed his sheep
and gather lilies.

³ I am his, and he is mine,
as he feeds his sheep
among the lilies.

He Speaks:

- ⁴ My dearest, the cities of Tirzah
and Jerusalem
are not as lovely as you.
Your charms are more powerful
than all of the stars
in the heavens.▷
- ⁵ Turn away your eyes—
they make me melt.
Your hair tosses about
as gracefully as goats
coming down from Gilead.
- ⁶ Your teeth are whiter
than sheep freshly washed;
they match perfectly,
not one is missing.
- ⁷ Behind your veil are hidden
beautiful rosy cheeks.¹
- ⁸ What if I could have
sixty queens, eighty wives,
and thousands of others!
- ⁹ You would be my only choice,
my flawless dove,
the favorite child
of your mother.
The young women, the queens,
and all the others
tell how excited you are
as they sing your praises:
- ¹⁰ You are as majestic
as the morning sky—
glorious as the moon—
blinding as the sun!
Your charms are more powerful
than all the stars above.▷

She Speaks:

- ¹¹ I went down to see if blossoms
were on the walnut trees,
grapevines, and fruit trees.
- ¹² But in my imagination
I was suddenly riding
on a glorious chariot.¹

Their Friends Speak:

- ¹³ Dance! Dance!
Beautiful woman from Shulam,
let us see you dance!

She Speaks:

Why do you want to see
this woman from Shulam
'dancing with the others?'

The Wedding Dance

He Speaks:

- 7** You are a princess,
and your feet are graceful
in their sandals.
Your thighs are works of art,
each one a jewel;
- ² your navel is a wine glass
filled to overflowing.
Your body is full and slender
like a bundle of wheat
bound together by lilies.
- ³ Your breasts are like twins
of a deer.
- ⁴ Your neck is like ivory,
and your eyes sparkle
like the pools of Heshbon
by the gate of Bath-Rabbim.
Your nose is beautiful
like Mount Lebanon
above the city of Damascus.
- ⁵ Your head is held high
like Mount Carmel;
your hair is so lovely
'it holds a king prisoner.'¹
- ⁶ You are beautiful,
so very desirable!
- ⁷ You are tall and slender
like a palm tree,
and your breasts are full.
- ⁸ I will climb that tree
and cling to its branches.
I will discover that your breasts
are clusters of grapes,
and that your breath
is the aroma of apples.
- ⁹ Kissing you is more delicious
than drinking the finest wine.
'How wonderful and tasty!'

She Speaks:

- ¹⁰ My darling, I am yours,
and you desire me.
- ¹¹ Let's stroll through the fields
and sleep in the villages.
- ¹² At dawn let's slip out and see
if grapevines and fruit trees
are covered with blossoms.
When we are there,
I will give you my love.
- ¹³ Perfume from the magic flower
fills the air, my darling.

Right at our doorstep
I have stored up for you
all kinds of tasty fruits.

If Only You and I . . .

She Speaks:

- 8 If you were my brother,
I could kiss you
whenever we happen to meet,
and no one would say
I did wrong.
- 2 I could take you to the home
of my mother,
'who taught me all I know.'
I would give you delicious wine
and fruit juice as well.
- 3 Put your left hand under my head
and embrace me
with your right arm.
- 4 Young women of Jerusalem,
promise me by the power
of deer and gazelles
never to awaken love
before it is ready.

Their Friends Speak:

- 5 Who is this young woman
coming in from the desert
and leaning on the shoulder
of the one she loves?

She Speaks:

- I stirred up your passions
under the apple tree
where you were born.
- 6 Always keep me in your heart
and wear this bracelet
to remember me by.
The passion of love
bursting into flame
is more powerful than death,
stronger than the grave.

Notes

*An asterisk preceding a verse number in a poetic passage of this book indicates that the contents of two or more verses have been joined together and rearranged beginning with the verse so marked.

Phrases enclosed in half square superscript brackets (‘¹’) are those that are difficult to translate from the original Hebrew with great certainty. Consequently, the English rendering given should be understood as only one possible way of translating such texts.

▷ **2.12** *sing*: Or “trim the vines.”

- 7 Love cannot be drowned
by oceans or floods;
it cannot be bought,
no matter what is offered.

Their Friends Speak:

- 8 We have a little sister
whose breasts
are not yet formed.
If someone asks to marry her,
what should we do?
- 9 She isn't a wall
that we can defend
behind a silver shield.
Neither is she a room
that we can protect
behind a wooden door.

She Speaks:

- 10 I am a wall around a city,
my breasts are towers,
and just looking at me
brings him great pleasure.
- 11 Solomon has a vineyard
at Baal-Hamon,
which he rents to others
for a thousand pieces
of silver each.
- 12 My vineyard is mine alone!
Solomon can keep his silver
and the others can keep
their share of the profits.

He Speaks:

- 13 You are in the garden
with friends all around.
Let me hear your voice!

She Speaks:

- 14 Hurry to me, my darling!
Run faster than a deer
to mountains of spices.

▷ **6.4** *all ... heavens*: Or “a mighty army ready for war.”

▷ **6.10** *all ... above*: Or “a mighty army ready for war.”