

# Solomon's Song of Songs

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## *Preface*

### *Translation: Song of Solomon*

This translation of the poem is a combination taken from three sources: the NRS (New Revised Standard); the translation found in the book, *Song of Songs*<sup>1</sup>, and a some of my own (though limited).

The poem is arranged in two columns: the column on the left contains the words spoken by the young woman, those spoken by her lover are in the right-hand column. Words spoken by the daughters of Jerusalem are in bold and offset from the margin. Finally, I've inserted commentary (colored in orange) where I thought it could help.

## Chapter 1

*(2) Kiss me, make me drunk with your kisses!*

*Your sweet loving*

*Is better than wine*

*(3) You are fragrant,*

*You are myrrh and aloes.*

*All the young women want you.*

*(4) Take me by the hand, let us run together!*

*My lover, my king, has brought me into his chambers.*

*We will laugh, you and I, and count*

*Each kiss,*

*Better than win.*

*Every one of them wants you*

*(5) I am dark, daughters of Jerusalem,*

*And I am beautiful!*

*Dark as the tents of Kedar, lavish*

*As Solomon's tapestries.*

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<sup>1</sup> See on Amazon, Bloch, Chana and Bloch, Ariel, "[Song of Songs](#)"

*(6) Do not see me only as dark:  
The sun has stared at me.*

*My brothers were angry with me,  
They made me guard the vineyards,  
I have not guarded my own.*

*(7) Tell me, my only love,  
Where do you pasture your sheep,  
Where will you let them rest  
In the heat of noon?  
Why should I lose my way among the flocks  
Of your companions?*

*(12) My king lay down beside me  
And my fragrance  
Wakened the night.*

*(13) All night between my breasts  
My lover is a cluster of myrrh,  
A sheaf of henna blossoms  
In the vineyards of Ein Gedi.*

*(16) You are beautiful, my king,  
And gentle. Where ever we lie  
Our bed is green.*

*(17) Our roof beams are cedar,  
Our rafters are fir.*

## **Chapter 2**

*(1) I am the rose of Sharon  
The wild lily of the valleys.*

*(8) Loveliest of women,  
If you lose your way,  
Follow in the tracks of the sheep,  
Graze your goats in the shade  
Of the shepherds' tents*

*(9) My lover, I dreamed of you  
As a mare, my very own,  
Among Pharaoh's chariots*

*(10) Your cheekbones,  
Those looped earrings,  
That string of beads at your throat!*

*(11) I will make you golden earrings  
With silver filigree.*

*(15) And you, my lover, how beautiful you are!  
Your eyes are doves.*

*(2) Like a lily in a field  
Of thistles,*

Such is my lover  
Among the young women

(3) *And my lover among the young men  
Is a branching apricot tree in the wood.  
In that shade I have often lingered,  
Tasking the fruit*

(4) *Now he has brought me to the house of wine  
And his flag over me is love.*

(5) *Let me lie among vine blossoms,  
In a bed of apricots!  
I am in the fever of love.*

(6) *His left hand beneath my head,  
His right arm  
Holding me close*

(7) *Daughters of Jerusalem, swear to me  
By the gazelles, but the deer in the field,  
That you will never awaken love  
Until it is ripe.*

(8) *The voice of my lover: listen!  
Bounding over the mountains  
Toward me, across the hills.*

(9) *My lover is a gazelle, a wild stag.  
There he stands on the other side  
Of our wall, gazing  
Between the stones.*

(10) *And he calls to me, saying,  
"Hurry, my lover,  
my friend,  
and come away!*

(11) *Look, winter is over,  
The rains are done,*

(12) *Wildflowers spring up in the fields.  
Now is the time of the nightingale.  
In every meadow you hear  
The song of the turtledove.*

(13) *The fig tree has sweetened  
Its new green fruit  
And the young budded vines smell spicy.  
Hurry, my lover, my friend  
Come away.*

(14) *My dove in the clefts of the rock,  
In the shadow of the cliff,  
Let me see you, all of you!  
Let me hear your voice,  
Your delicious song.  
I love to look at you".*

(15) *Catch us the foxes,  
The quick little foxes*

That raid our vineyards  
Now, when the vines are in blossom.

*(16) My lover is mine and I am his.*

*He feasts*

*In a field of lilies.*

*(17) Before day breathes,*

*Before the shadows of night are gone,*

*Run away, my lover!*

*Be like a gazelle, a wild stag*

*On the jagged mountains.*

### Chapter 3

*(1) At night in my bed I longed*

*For my only love.*

*I sought him, but did not find him*

*(2) I must rise and go about the city,*

*The narrow streets and squares, till I find my only  
love.*

*I sought him everywhere*

*But I could not find him.*

*(3) Then the watchmen found me*

*As they went about the city.*

*“Have you seen him? Have you seen the one I  
love?”*

*(4) I had just passed them when I found*

*My only love.*

*I held him, I would not let him go*

*Until I brought him to my mother’s house,*

*Into my mother’s room.*

*(5) Daughters of Jerusalem, swear to me*

*By the gazelles, by the deer in the field,*

*That you will never awaken love*

*Until it is ripe*

*(6) Who is that rising from the desert*

*Like a pillar of smoke,*

*More fragrant with myrrh and frankincense*

*Than all the spices of the merchant!*

*(7) Oh the splendors of King Solomon!*

*The bravest of Israel surround his bed,*

*Threescore warriors*

*(8) Each of them skilled in battle,*

*Each with his sword on his thigh*

*Against the terror of night.*

*(9) King Solomon built a pavilion*

*From the cedars of Lebanon.*

*Its pillars he made of silver,*

*Cushions of gold,*

*Couches of purple linen,  
And the daughters of Jerusalem  
Paved it with love.  
(10)Come out, O daughters of Zion,  
And gaze at Solomon the King!  
See the crown his mother set on his head  
On the day of his wedding  
The day of his heart's great joy.*

## Chapter 4

(5) There are two images evoked in this verse. Her breasts are described as fawns – meaning young, playful, and not fully matured. Second, they are described as twins, meaning alike, symmetrical. Taken together, the idea of ‘perky’ is the image I think the author intends to invoke here.

(1)How beautiful you are, my lover,  
My friend! The doves of your eyes  
Looking out  
From the thicket of your hair.

Your hair  
Like a flock of goats  
Bounding down Mount Gilead.  
(2)Your teeth white ewes,  
All alike,  
That come up fresh from the pond.  
(3)A crimson ribbon your lips –  
how I listen for your voice!

The curve of your cheek  
A pomegranate  
In the thicket of your hair  
(4)Your neck is a tower of David  
Raised in splendor,  
A thousand bucklers hand upon it,  
All the shields of the warriors.  
(5)Your breasts are like fawns,  
Twins of a gazelle,  
Grazing in a field of lilies.

(6)Before day breathes,  
Before the shadows of night are gone,  
I will hurry to the mountain of myrrh,  
The hill of frankincense.

(7)You are all beautiful, my lover,  
My perfect one.

(8)Oh come with me, my bride,  
Come down with me from Lebanon.  
Look down from the peak of Amanah,  
Look down from Senir and Hermon,

From the mountains of the leopards,  
The lions' dens.  
(9) You have ravished my heart,  
My sister, my bride,  
Ravished me with one glance of your eyes,  
On link of your necklace.  
(10) And oh, your sweet loving,  
My sister, my bride.  
The wind of your kisses, the spice  
Of your fragrant oils.  
(11) Your lips are honey, honey and milk  
Are under your tongue,  
Your clothes hold the scent of Lebanon.  
(12) An enclosed garden is my sister, my bride,  
A hidden well, a sealed spring.  
(13) Your branches are an orchard  
Of pomegranate trees heavy with fruit,  
Flowing henna and spikenard,  
(14) Spikenard and saffron, cane and cinnamon,  
With every tree of frankincense,  
Myrrh and aloes,  
All the rare spices.  
(15) You are a fountain in the garden,  
A wall of living waters  
That stream from Lebanon.

*(16) Awake, north wind! O south wind, come,  
Breather upon my garden,  
Let its spices stream out.  
Let my lover come into his garden  
And taste its delicious fruit.*

## Chapter 5

(1) I have come into my garden,  
My sister, my bride,  
I have gathered my myrrh and my spices,  
I have eaten from the honeycomb,  
I have drunk the milk and the wine.

Feast, friends, and drink  
Till you are drunk with love!

*(2) I was asleep but my heart stayed awake.  
Listen!  
My lover knocking:*

*“Open, my sister, my friend,  
My dove, my perfect one!  
My hair is wet, drenched  
With the dew of the night.”*

*(3)But I have taken off my clothes,  
How can I dress again?  
I have bathed my feet,  
Must I dirty them?*

*(4)My lover reached in for the latch  
And my heart  
Beat wild*

*(5)I rose to open to my lover,  
My fingers wet with myrrh,  
Sweet flowing myrrh  
On the doorbolt.*

*(6)I opened to my lover  
But he had slipped away.  
How I wanted him when he spoke!*

*I sought him everywhere  
But could not find him.  
I called his name  
But he did not answer.*

*(7)Then the watchmen found me  
As they went about the city.  
They beat me, they bruised me,  
They tore the shawl from my shoulders,  
Those watchmen of the walls.*

*(8)Swear to me, daughters of Jerusalem!  
If you see him  
You must tell him  
I am in the fever of love.*

***(9)How is your lover different  
From any other, O beautiful woman?  
Who is your lover  
That we must swear to you?***

*(10) My lover is milk and wine,  
He towers  
Above ten thousand.*

*(11)His head is burnished gold,  
The mane of his hair  
Black as the raven*

*(12)His eyes like doves  
By the rivers  
Of milk and plenty*

*(13)His cheeks a bed of spices,  
A treasure  
Of precious scents, his lips*

*Red lilies wet with myrrh  
(14)His arm a golden scepter with gems of topas,  
His loins the ivory of thrones*

*Inlaid with sapphire,*

*(15)His thighs like marble pillars  
On pedestals of gold.*

*Tall as Mount Lebanon,  
A man like a cedar!  
(16)His mouth is sweet wine, he is all delight.*

*This is my lover  
And this is my friend,  
O daughters of Jerusalem.*

## **Chapter 6**

***(1)Where has your lover gone,  
O beautiful one?  
Say where he is  
And we will seek him with you***

*(2)My lover has gone down to  
His garden, to the beds of spices,  
To graze and to gather lilies.*

*(3)My lover is mine and I am his.  
He feasts  
In a field of lilies*

*(4)You are beautiful, my lover, as Tirzah,  
Majestic as Jerusalem,  
Daunting  
As the stars in their courses.  
(5)Your eyes! Turn them away  
For they dazzle me.*

*Your hair is like a flock of goats  
Bounding down Mount Gilead.*

*(6)Your teeth white ewes,  
All alike,  
That come up fresh from the pond.*

*(7)The curve of your cheek  
A pomegranate  
In your thicket of hair.*

*(8)Threescore are the queens,  
Fourscore the king's women,  
And maidens, maidens without number.*

*(9)One alone is my dove,  
My perfect, my only one,  
Love of her mother, light  
Of her mother's eyes.  
Every maiden calls her happy,*

**(10)“Who is that rising like the morning  
star,  
Clear as the moon,  
Bright as the blazing sun,  
Daunting as the stars in their courses!**

Queens praise her,  
And all the king’s women say:

(11)Then I went down to the walnut grove  
To see the new green by the brook,  
To see if the vine had budded,  
If the pomegranate trees were in flower  
(12)And oh! Before I was aware,  
She sat me in the most lavish of chariots.

## Chapter 7

**(1)Again, O Shulamite,  
Dance again,  
That we may watch you dancing!**

**Why do you gaze at the Shulamite  
As she whirls  
Down the roes of dancers?**

“Below your naval” – translated from **בֵּתֵן** (*beten*)  
literally refers to the lower abdomen, womb, or  
body.

As for the fawns see commentary on 4:5

(2)How graceful your steps in those sandals,  
O nobleman’s daughter.

The gold of your thigh  
Shaped by a master craftsman.

(3)Your navel is the moon’s  
Bright drinking cup.  
May it brim with wine!

(4)Below your naval lies a mound of wheat  
Edged with lilies.  
Your breasts are two fawns,  
Twins of a gazelle.

(5)Your neck is a tower of ivory.  
Your eyes are pools in Heshbon, at the gates  
Of that city of lords.

Your proud nose the tower of Lebanon  
That looks toward Damascus.

(6)Your head crowns you like Mount Carmel,  
The hair of your head  
Like royal purple. A king  
Is caught in the thicket.

(7)How wonderful you are, O Love,

How much sweeter  
Than all other pleasures!  
(8) That day you seemed to me a tall palm tree  
And your breasts  
The clusters of its fruit.  
(9) I said in my heart,  
Let me climb into that palm tree  
And take hold of its branches.

And oh, may your breasts be like clusters  
Of grapes on a vine, the scent  
Of your breath like apricots,  
(10) Your mouth good wine –

*(That pleases my lover, rousing him  
Even from sleep)*

The grammar of this verse suggests that this text (in parenthesis to the left) is something she is thinking in response to what he has just said in the first line of verse 10. Evidently, she has done something to awaken him from sleep.

(11) I am my lover's,  
He longs for me,  
Only for me  
(12) Come, my lover,  
Let us go out into the fields  
And lie all night among the flowering henna.  
(13) Let us go early to the vineyards  
To see if the vine has budded,  
If the blossoms have opened  
And the pomegranate is in flower.

*There I will make love to you.*

(14a) The air is filled with the scent of love making.  
And at our doors  
Rare fruit of every kind, my lover,  
I have hid away for you.

(14a) In this verse the phrase “scent of lovemaking” is rendered in Hebrew as **הַדְּדַיִם נָתַן רִיחַ** (*ha-dudaim nat'nu reiyach*) “the mandrakes give odor”. Note that the mandrake was thought to be an aphrodisiac with fertility enhancing powers (c.f., Gen 30:14-16)

Alternatively,

(14b) The air is filled with the scent of mandrakes  
And at our doors  
Rare fruit of every kind, my lover,  
I have stored away for you.

Boring, I know, but the Hebrew word for mandrake **דָּדָא** (*duda*) derives from the same root as the Hebrew word for physical sex, *dod*. Thus, the ancient Hebrew audience would have interpreted this stanza as a rather lascivious depiction of what she plans to do once they are alone in the field.

(14b) is the translation found in the book.

## Chapter 8

*(1) If only you were a brother  
Who nursed at my mother's breast!  
I would kiss you in the streets  
And no one would scorn me.*

*(2) I would bring you to the house of my mother  
And she would teach me.  
I would give you spiced wine to drink,  
My pomegranate wine.*

*(3) His left hand beneath my head,  
His right arm  
Holding me close.*

*(4) Daughters of Jerusalem, swear to me  
That you will never awaken love  
Until it is ripe.*

*(5a) Who is that  
Rising from the desert,  
Her head on her lover's shoulder!*

*(5b) There, beneath the apricot tree,  
Your mother conceived you,  
There you were born.  
In that very place, I awakened you.*

*(6) Bind me as a seal upon your heart,  
A sign upon your arm,*

*For love is as fierce as death,  
Its jealousy bitter as the grave.  
Even its sparks are a raging fire,  
A devouring flame.*

*(7) Great seas cannot extinguish love,  
No river can sweep it away.*

*If a man tried to buy love  
With all the wealth of his house,  
He would be despised.*

The meaning here is not one of incest. Rather, the verse reflects her desire to be able to express her love publically. Kissing a family member would not bring condemnation.

A picture is worth a thousand words.



(5b) Probably refers to where they first had sex?

**(8) We have a little sister  
And she has no breasts.  
What shall we do for our sister  
When suitors besiege her?  
(9) If she is a wall, we will build  
A silver turret over her.  
If she is a door, we will bolt her**

(10) I am a wall  
And my breasts are towers  
But for my lover, I am  
A city of peace

Alternatively,

I am a wall,  
And my breasts are visible to all.  
Then, as now, I am in his eyes,  
complete.

(14) Hurry, my lover! Run away,  
My gazelle, my wild stag  
On the hills of cinnamon.

### With beams of cedarwood.

The use of 'tower' to render the Hebrew word מִגְדָּלוֹת (*mig'dalot*) is literally correct. However, I would argue that a more figurative, poetic rendering would recognize that the root of *mig'dalot* connotes grown-up, great, full, heavy, important, manifest. Obviously, she disagrees with the assessments of her brothers.

In this verse 'complete' is translated from the Hebrew word שְׁלוֹם (*shalom*). Often translated as 'peace', *shalom* has a much wider semantic range that includes tranquility, completeness, self-actualization, and fulfillment.

(11) King Solomon had a vineyard  
On the Hill of Plenty.

He gave that vineyard to watchmen  
And each would earn for its fruit  
One thousand pieces of silver

(12) My vineyard is all my own.

Keep your thousand, Solomon! And pay  
Two hundred to those  
Who must guard the fruit.

(13) O woman in the garden,

All our friends listen for your voice.  
Let me hear it now.