

The Song of Solomon
or
The Song of Songs

<CHAPTER 1>

<Title 1:1>

1 The Song of Songs by Solomon (*or, concerning Solomon*).¹

<The First Poem 1:2 - 2:7>

Maiden

2 If only he would kiss me

with the kisses of his mouth.²

For your love is (*or, caresses are*)³ more delightful than wine;

³ better than your fragrant ointments⁴

(*or, the fragrance of your ointments is sweet*).

Your reputation (*or, name*) is as perfume that is poured out;⁵

(*or, You, yourself are oil of myrrh*)

therefore it is not surprising that the maidens (*or, young women*) love

you

(*or, therefore no maiden could resist you*).

4 Take me away with you! Let us hurry!⁶

The king⁷ has brought me to his room.⁸

Companions

Let us rejoice and be happy for you!

We will celebrate (*or, extol*)⁹ your love more than wine!

Maiden

It is not surprising¹⁰ that all the women love you.

Maiden

5 I am swarthy, yet beautiful,

O young women of Jerusalem;

1 The Hebrew preposition has a wide range of meanings: "by which, belonging to, according to, about, or for." A suggested emendation: *ashr* to *ashrm* = "The Song of Songs I will sing to Solomon." It is also possible to translate: The Best of Songs.

2 Literally: "let him give me of the kisses of his mouth."

3 LXX: "breasts."

4 Literally: "Sweetness belongs to the fragrance of your ointments."

5 So: LXX, Old Latin & Vulgate. The Hebrew is an unusual form: second or third person feminine. As a noun the word would mean "oil of myrrh." There is a word play in Hebrew in stichs 1 & 2.

6 This stich is questionable in that it does not correspond to the poetic form of the verse.

7 In ancient Egyptian love lyrics "the king" signifies the lover, not necessarily one who is royal.

8 So: emended. Literally: "bring me, O king, to your chambers. LXX & Syriac: "Bring me to your chamber, O King."

9 Hebrew uncertain. MT: %\$&, / = extol. Emended: *nshkklt* "we will be drunk with." Keel translates: "We want to be unrestrained to enjoy ourselves with you."

10 Hebrew: %\$&, / = rightly. This stich is thought by some scholars to be a gloss and is omitted in Old Latin. It does not correspond to the poetic Hebrew form.

dark as the desert tents of Kedar;¹¹
 but as beautiful as the luxurious properties of Solomon
 (*or, Salmar*);¹²
 6 Do not stare (*or, look askance*) at me because I am swarthy;
 because I am tanned by the sun.¹³
 My mother's sons quarreled with me.
 they forced me to be the guardian over the vineyards;¹⁴
 but I did not guard my own vineyard.¹⁵

Maiden 7 Tell me, my true love,
 where do you pasture your sheep,
 where do you have them rest at mid-day?
 I don't want to wander like¹⁶ someone who caresses herself,
 following alongside your companions
 (*or, to hide from your shepherd friends*).¹⁷

Lover 8 If you do not know where I pasture my sheep,
 you, whose beauty surpasses that of other women,
 then follow the trail of the sheep
 and let your goats graze
 near where the shepherds are camped.

Lover 9 I have likened you, my love,¹⁸
 to a mare among Pharaoh's chariots.¹⁹
 10 Your cheeks are beautifully adorned with ornaments,²⁰
 your neck with strings of jewels.²¹
 (*or, Your face is beautifully adorned with jewelry,
 and your neck with strings of beads.*)

Companions 11 We will add hand made ornaments of gold,

11 A Bedouin tribe from Northern Arabia or possibly from south east of Damascus. The exact location is uncertain. Their tents were of woven black goat hair.

12 Hebrew: *shmlh* Salmar: a southern desert tribe which lived in the vicinity of Petra prior to the 5 century BCE.

13 Literally: "the sun has scorched me." An Aramaic form. Several questions arise concerning the MT wording.

14 This is possibly a euphemism referring to her body, thus having sexual overtones.

15 Not keeping her own vineyard may be a euphemism for her giving herself to her lover.

16 LXX: περιβαλλω.

17 Hebrew uncertain. Keel translates: "For why should I (appear) like one wandering in confusion among the flocks of your companions."

18 The Hebrew term as used in the Song of Solomon has as a root word "to guard, care for or tend" with emphasis on the delight stemming from the responsibility.

19 Hebrew unclear. Egyptian horses that were used for chariots were stallions. A mare in estrus in the presence of stallions would cause excitement. Thus: "You are as outstanding as a mare among many stallions."

20 Again looking back to the previous line, the Egyptian chariot horses were elaborately decorated. The lover is making a rather unusual comparison. The Hebrew word translated "ornaments" literally is "turnings." Possibly plaited wreaths, earrings or some other decorative effect.

21 The Hebrew word for "jewels" is only used here. An emendation has "to be comely" thus, "Your neck is very beautiful."

studded with silver.²²

Maiden 12 While the king reclined²³ on his couch,
the fragrance of perfume²⁴ filled the air.

Maiden 13 My beloved,²⁵ to me is like a sachet of myrrh,²⁶
lodged between my breasts.²⁷
14 My lover is like a spray of henna blossoms
in the vineyards of Engedi.²⁸

Lover 15 How beautiful you are, my love;
how beautiful you are!
Your eyes are as charming (*or, soft, gentle*) as doves.

Maiden 16 How handsome you are, my dearest,
truly lovely.
The luxuriant grass²⁹ will be our wedding couch.³⁰

Lover 17 The beams of our house are cedar,
our roof³¹ is the pine³² trees.

<CHAPTER 2>

Maiden 1 I am like a rose³³ of Sharon,³⁴
a lily (*or, hyacinth*) of the valley.³⁵

Lover 2 Like a lily between the thorns (*or brambles*),
so is my darling, when compared to the other girls.

Maiden 3 Like an apple (*or, apricot*)³⁶ among the trees of the forest,

22 Literally: "with studs of silver."

23 LXX: ἀνακλινο The Hebrew root word is "surround," perhaps intending to say "in his own surroundings." Are the king and the lover the same person? Many scholars feel they are. Cf. footnote 7, page 1.

24 Literally "nard" or "spikenard," an ointment from India. It was used in ancient times as a love charm.

25 Hebrew: ב%\$\$\$ Literally: "my uncle."

26 A resinous gum from a species of tree in southern Arabia.

27 The Hebrew is ambiguous. Allegory reached an extreme when Cyril of Alexandria interpreted this verse as the breasts being the Old and New Testaments and Jesus Christ the sachet of myrrh, the only link of the "two-ness" for Jesus spans the testaments as does the sachet between the two breasts.

28 An oasis west of the Dead Sea, famed for its vineyards. The name means "spring of a young goat." This stich is possibly a euphemism with sexual overtones.

29 *raymh* = "green, luxurious."

30 The Hebrew word describes an elaborate bed or couch.

31 Hebrew uncertain. In later Hebrew and Arabic it meant "furniture."

32 MT: *brwshis*. LXX and Syriac have "cypress or Phoenician juniper."

33 Hebrew: , -3W(= saffron or crocus. Literally: "to form bulbs."

34 The low costal plane south of Mount Carmel.

35 Not the bell shaped flowers we know as lily of the valley. The Hebrew root word is "six" thus a six petaled flower.

36 The exact nature of the tree is questionable. There is no evidence that apples were grown in Israel at that time. The Hebrew

so is my darling compared to other youths.

word conveys the idea of a tart fruit.