

Lover 9 You have enchanted me, my sweetheart, my bride!
You have stolen my heart
with one glance of your eyes;¹
with one coil (*or, bead*) of your necklace.²

Lover 10 How sweet your love is, my sweetheart, my bride!
Your love³ is more delightful than wine
and the perfume of your garments⁴ than any spice!⁵
11 Your lips taste as sweet as honey, my bride,⁶
what you whisper is sweeter than honey and cream.⁷
The scent of your robe is like the fragrance of Lebanon.

12 You are an enclosed (*or, secret*) garden,⁸ my sweetheart, my bride,
a hidden fountain, a private spring.⁹
13 Your limbs¹⁰ are a park¹¹ of pomegranates,
all the choicest fruits,
[henna with nard,]¹²
14 nard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon,¹³
with all the incense bearing trees (*or, frankincense*),¹⁴
myrrh and aloes¹⁵
with all the choice aromas (*or, perfumes*).¹⁶

Maiden 15 [*You are*] a garden fountain, a flowering spring,
a rippling stream from Lebanon.¹⁷

1 Literally: "with one of your eyes."

2 Hebrew meaning uncertain. Perhaps: "one strand of your necklace" would convey the thought.

3 The Hebrew word is a plural word. LXX translates: "your breasts" which would be an emendation.

4 So: LXX.

5 There seems to be an extra stich which is not needed for the Hebrew poetry.

6 Possibly implying that her words are sweet. Literally: "Your lips distill nectar" which is hardly appealing to think of honey or some other sweetness, i.e. date or grape syrup dribbling from a person's lips.

7 Literally: "honey and milk are under our tongue."

8 In ancient times this would have been considered to be a euphemistic description of the female sexual organ. Being locked up implied virginity.

9 Apparently another comment with a sexual overtone. Some scholars translate this as "a rock garden" based on the literal Hebrew which is "stone heap, fountain."

10 The Hebrew root word is *shlch* "to send forth or produce." It is also the root word for the Arabic word for "vagina."

11 This Hebrew word, (ש95 is best translated as "park" rather than "orchard" as many translators select. The Hebrew in this verse is uncertain.

12 Omitted by the Vulgate. Henna is a shrub with white flowers the leaves of which are used for a reddish brown dye. Nard is the fragrant oil of a plant, genus *Nardostachys jatamansi* found in India.

13 Saffron: genus *Crocus sativus*, having a spicy floral scent. Calamus: genus *Calamus aromaticus*, has a gingery smell and taste.

14 Genus *Boswellia*. a small shrub that grows in Arabia, the gum of which is very aromatic.

15 Not the plant that is used in a variety of lotions. The possibilities are: 1. Eaglewood. 2. Sandalwood, 3 Aloe succotrina: a spice extruded from the leaves of a shrub native to an island in the Red Sea. The meter, in Hebrew seems awkward.

16 These exotic spices and perfumes serve as symbols not only of eroticism in the poem but also as symbols of the rarity and beauty of the maiden.

17 Emended it would read: "The spring in my garden, it is a well of fresh water."

Maiden 16 Awake, O north wind,
and come, O south wind!
Blow on my garden,
let its perfume spread.
Let my lover come to his garden
and enjoy the luscious fruit. ¹⁸

<CHAPTER 5>

Lover 1 I have come to my garden, my sweetheart, my bride.
I have gathered my myrrh and my spices,
I have eaten my honey with my honeycomb.
I have drunk my wine with my milk,

Maiden Eat, O friends and drink:
until you are drunk with love
(*or, and be drunk with love!*)! ¹⁹

<The Fourth Poem 5:2 - 6:3>

Maiden 2 Though I slept, my mind was awake. ²⁰
Listen! My lover is knocking ²¹ [*at the door*].

Lover "Open up to me, my sweetheart, my bride,
my dove, my flawless one (*or, my paragon*);
for my head is drenched ²² with dew,
my locks ²³ are wet with the dampness of the night."

Maiden 3 I have already taken off my dress (*or, tunic*), ²⁴
I can't get dressed again, can I?
I've bathed my feet, ²⁵
I can't get them dirty again, can I?
4 My darling put his hand on the latch (*or hole*) ²⁶
and my feelings were aroused within me. ²⁷

18 The meter in Hebrew is awkward. Some attempts at emendation have been made but none is generally accepted.

19 A complex set of double entendres are found in this verse.

20 Some scholars emend the stich: "The spring in my garden is a well of fresh water."

21 859 is the Hebrew root for the word "push, drive hard, knock." Some scholars interpret this as a dream and translate "I dreamed that my darling..."

22 The Hebrew root word is "full of."

23 The Hebrew word is uncertain. The Mishnah translates it as "locks." BDB likens the Hebrew word ;&778b to the word "thorns" which has the same root word. ;77, = "hair over the forehead" if one accepts that emendation. A Rabbinic commentary implies "baldheadedness" and another Rabbinic commentary declares it to be "curly headed."

24 A long shirt like undergarment.

25 Some scholars feel this is a euphemism for the genitals. Possibly there is a double meaning.

26 Literally: "my beloved sent forth his hand from the hole." Hebrew meaning uncertain. 9%(is declared by BDB to have a secondary meaning.

27 Literally: "my bowels were moved for him." Bowels were considered to be the seat of the emotions at the time in which this was written. Many scholars consider this line to imply arousal and gratification. The words "within me" are the result of an

5 I arose²⁸ and let my darling in.
 My hands were wet with myrrh,
 my fingers with liquid myrrh,
 as I grasped the handle of the lock.
 6 I opened the door for my darling,
 but my darling had already departed²⁹ and was gone.
 O became faint because of his words.³⁰
 I looked for him but could not find him;
 I called to him, but there was no response.
 7 The watchmen found me,
 as they patrolled the city.
 They beat me, they wounded me,³¹
 those sentinels (*or, guards*) on the city walls.
 They even took away (*or, stripped me of*) my cloak (*or, cape*).³²
 8 Promise me, O maidens of Jerusalem,
 [*Promise me in the name of the gazelles*
and the wild deer of the field,]³³
 if you meet my darling,
 that you tell him that I am sick with love.³⁴

Companions 9 What is so extraordinary about your beloved?³⁵
 How is your beloved better than any other
 that we should take this kind of oath?

Maidens 10 My darling is all³⁶ bronzed (*or dazzling*) and healthy;
 most outstanding among ten thousand
 (*or, there is none who is his equal*).
 11 His head is like the finest quality gold;
 his hair is curly (*or, wavy*),³⁷
 as black as a raven.

emendation. b-3 instead of &b-3

28 This Hebrew word implies "eagerness."

29 MT: 9w3= "he passed on." An emendation: 8/(= "he had turned away."

30 Literally: "My soul went forth upon his speaking" meaning, I fainted when he spoke. KEE: "I was completely stunned by his retreat."

31 Literally: "The watchmen met me." A Middle Assyrian Law book of the 12th Century BCE states: "A prostitute dare not veil herself: her head remains unveiled. Anyone seeing a prostitute should arrest her, gather witnesses and bring her to the entrance of the palace...She should be given 50 blows with a club." The Hebrew word for "to beat" is the same word used to beat gold to make gold leaf. There is a play on words in this verse, in the original language.

32 The word translated "stripped me" *nayli* is translated "ignored" by some translators. \$b\$9 = a light weight summer garment: LXX: θειστρον.

33 Added by LXX. No doubt a gloss based on 2:7 and 3:5.

34 Grammatically this can be a question, as has been done by the Vulgate: "What will you tell him?" LXX translates it as a statement.

35 Arabic suggests: "What kind of beloved is your beloved?"

36 Literally: "above."

37 The Hebrew word seems to be an Akkadian loan word. In Akkadian it would mean "palm sprouts" hence it is interpreted as "wavy." LXX uses: ελαττα = bald.

12 His eyes are as beautiful as doves
 beside a flowing spring.
 [*His teeth are*] white as milk,³⁸
 fitly set,³⁹

13 His cheeks are like a fragrant garden;
 emitting wonderful aromas.⁴⁰
 His lips are like lilies⁴¹
 moist with the finest myrrh.

14 His arms⁴² are like rolls (*or, round bars*) of gold,
 studded with jewels,⁴³
 set like precious stones.
 His torso⁴⁴ is as beautiful as a column⁴⁵
 adorned with lapis lazuli.⁴⁶

15 His legs⁴⁷ are alabaster (*or, marble*) pillars,
 set in sockets of gold.⁴⁸
 His appearance is as majestic as Lebanon,
 as imposing as the cedars.

16 His whispers⁴⁹ are most sweet.⁵⁰
 and he is totally desirable.
 This is my darling, and this is my lover,
 O young women of Jerusalem!

<CHAPTER 6>

Companions 1[H17]⁵¹ O most beautiful of all women,
 where has your lover gone?
 Which way did he go?
 Tell us and we will help you look for him.

38 An attempt to make sense from the Hebrew words which literally say: "bathed in milk."

39 Hebrew uncertain. Literally "setting by a full place" or "sitting by a pool." LXX: "by a flood."

40 Hebrew manuscripts have a variety of variants, thus making the Hebrew unclear. Is she speaking about his cheeks or his beard? It is interesting that she does not speak of his looks but the odor of his beard. The word translated "emitting" in Hebrew is *mndlwt* = "towers." LXX: "exhaling" or "yielding."

41 KEE: "lotus flowers." *synvwv*

42 Literally: "hands" but the thought seems to be a reference to gold arm bands. Some scholars feel this harks back to 5:4.

43 Hebrew: *ββτρσηση* This could be "Tarshish stones" or "chrysolite" according to the LXX. Either arm bands or rings apparently are set with stones. Another possibility would be "jet" or "golden topaz."

44 The Hebrew word is "intestines."

45 Hebrew unclear. *αψησητ* hardly can mean "work" as in the RSV, NRSV. If it is a loan word from Akkadian it could mean "column." Recent scholarship has opted for this translation.

46 A Hebrew word loaned from Sanskrit. Lapis lazuli comes from Afghanistan and was very costly.

47 The Hebrew word is unclear. When used in I Samuel 9:24 it means "from the knee downward." In Judges 15:8 it means the thighs. "Leg" is perhaps a suitable translation.

48 Cf. Sirach 26:18.

49 Literally: "palate."

50 Ugaritic and Hebrew share the same root word. The Ugaritic word we know can also mean "kissing."

51 The numbering in the Hebrew O.T. is different from the English Bible numbering. [H17] signifies that Chapter 6 verse 1 in English is verse 17 of chapter 5 in Hebrew.

Maidens 2 [H1] My lover has gone into his garden,⁵²
a fragrant garden of spices,⁵³
to browse in the garden⁵⁴
and to pick the lilies (*or, lotus blossoms*).⁵⁵
3 [H2] I am my lover's, and my lover is mine;
He pastures his flock among the lilies (*or, lotus blossoms*).

Lover 4 [H3] You, my love, are as beautiful as Tirzah,⁵⁶
as attractive as Jerusalem,
as awesome (*or, majestic*) as those who are renowned
(*or distinguished*) [*persons*].⁵⁷
5 [H4] Turn your eyes away from me,
for they overwhelm (*or, dazzle*)⁵⁸ me
(*or, do not look at me like that,*
I cannot resist you).

Your hair ripples like a flock of goats
streaming down from the slopes of Gilead.
6 [H5] Your teeth are as white as a flock of ewes
that have come up from the washing,
all perfectly matched,
and not one of them missing.
7 [H6] Behind your veil
your cheeks glow like a pomegranate that has been split open.⁵⁹
8 [H7] Let the king have⁶⁰ sixty queens and eighty concubines,⁶¹
and countless young women;⁶²
9 [H8] but the one without equal is my dove, my perfect one,
her mother's only daughter;
the perfect (*or, favorite*) [*daughter*] of her mother.
The young girls saw her and acclaimed her to be fortunate;⁶³
the queens and concubines also praise her.⁶⁴

52 A euphemism for love making?

53 Cf. Footnote 40 Song of Solomon 5:13.

54 Literally: "to pasture in the garden."

55 Cf. Footnote 41 Song of Solomon 55:13.

56 The capital of Israel of the time of Jeroboam to Omri, ca. 960 - 871 BCE. Prior to that it had been a Canaanite city in what came to be Samaria. Its present day name is Tel el-farah, 6 miles north of Shechem. LXX: εὐδοκία = contentment or object of desire.

57 Hebrew uncertain. The translation is an emendation. Literally: "army with banners."

58 LXX: ἀναπτερω.

59 The LXX adds a line about the lips. 5:6-7 are repeated from 4:1b - 3 with minor variants. Old Latin, Syriac and the Syro-Hexapla include what is omitted from 4:1b - 3 in their versions.

60 This could possibly be translated: "If I had sixty...."

61 The Hebrew words translated "sixty" and "eighty" have a rhythmic lilt. Three classes of women were found in a harem in those days. I Kings 11:3 reports that Solomon had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines.

62 Some scholars add *lshlmh* "belonging to Solomon."

63 The same phrase is used in Proverbs 31:29 and there is best translated: "call her blessed."

64 A few scholars translate: "and they recognized how beautiful she was." Hebrew: *hwaXayw* "and they bless her."

Companions 10 [H9] "Who is this beautiful woman?
She is as beautiful as the moon, bright as the sun,
awesome as those who are renowned. ⁶⁵

Lover 11 [H10] I went down to the nut (*or, walnut*) grove, ⁶⁶
to look at the verdure ⁶⁷ of the valley; ⁶⁸
to see if there were any buds on the vines,
and whether the pomegranates were in bloom.
12 [H11] Without my being aware of it, my desire set me ⁶⁹
as one riding a royal chariot. ⁷⁰

Companions 13 [H7:1] Turn back, Turn back, O Shulammitte, ⁷¹
turn back, turn back, that we may see you again.

Maiden Why should you gaze on the Shulammitte
as you would gaze on the confrontation of two armies
(*or, on the dance of Mahanaim*)? ⁷²

<CHAPTER 7>

Companions ⁷³ 1 [H2] How lovely your sandaled feet ⁷⁴ are,
O noble woman (*or, majestic maiden*)! ⁷⁵
Your hips are curved like the jeweled curves of a necklace, ⁷⁶
the work of a master craftsman.
2 [H3] Your navel ⁷⁷ is a rounded goblet. ⁷⁸
May blended wine never be lacking.
The curve of your stomach is as beautiful as a heap of wheat
surrounded by lilies.

65 Hebrew uncertain.

66 In early Hebrew the word meant "walnut." In later Hebrew the word simply meant "nut."

67 Literally: "green plants in the valley." LXX "fruit" as does the Targum.

68 *χηνχην* = a deep, narrow valley or gorge which would carry a torrent in the rainy season.

69 Literally: "my soul set me."

70 Hebrew unclear. Many emendations have been made, all of which are purely conjectural. MFT makes no attempt to translate this verse because of the questionable Hebrew.

71 The meaning is questionable. *hmmhnm* Many scholars omit the word in their translations. Is it a place? A feminine form of Solomon?

72 Hebrew unclear. Is the Hebrew word *mynhMh* the name of a place in Trans Jordan or the name of a kind of dance?

73 The plurals in 6:13 - 7:5 seem to denote that these verses are spoken by the companions though they seem to be more likely spoken by the lover.

74 The Hebrew word means either "feet" or "dance steps."

75 Literally: "daughter of a noble." The assumption is that she danced in rather sheer apparel for the companions, in response to her question in 6:13.

76 Literally: "the curves of your upper thighs (or, hips)." Scholars question if the reference is to the outer or the inner curves. In some Middle Eastern societies ornaments on the thighs were used in love making a part of a fertility ritual.

77 Literally: "navel" or "umbilical cord." Possibly pars pro toto implying the entire female genital region or the vulva. Syrian and Egyptian clay figures from the 2nd Millennium BCE would support this thought. Cf. KEE.

78 Literally: "a bowl of roundness," usually a wide rounded bowl with two handles. Possibly a subtle and tasteful allusion to the intimacies of sex.

3 [H4] Your breasts are like two fawns,
twins of a gazelle.⁷⁹
4 [H5] Your neck is like an ivory tower,⁸⁰
your eyes are like limpid pools in Heshbon,⁸¹
by the gate of Beth-rabbim (*or, the daughter of great people*).⁸²
Your nose⁸³ is straight, like the tower of Lebanon.
that faces toward Damascus.
5 [H6] Your head is held high, like Mount Carmel,⁸⁴
and your flowing hair⁸⁵ has a purple sheen;
a king could be captivated by your tresses.⁸⁶

Lover

6 [H7] How beautiful and charming you are!
My beloved, my delight.⁸⁷
7 [H8] Your stature is like a palm tree
and your breasts are round and full like clusters of fruit.
8 [H9] I said, 'I will climb the palm tree
and grasp its branches.'⁸⁸
May your breasts be like clusters of grapes;
may your breath⁸⁹ be like the aroma of apples,
9 [H10] may your speech (*or, kisses*)⁹⁰ be like the choicest wine
that goes down⁹¹ pleasantly,
flowing beyond the lips and teeth.⁹²

Maiden

10 [H11] I belong to my lover,
he is longing for me.
11 [H12] Come, my darling,
let us go into the countryside

79 Repeated from 4:5 with the final stich omitted. In the Syrian translation that line also appears.

80 The reference surely is to strength, dignity and elegance. One stich seems to be missing. Could it be misplaced? Is it 5a? "Your head is held high, like Mount Carmel"?

81 In Trans-Jordan, originally a Moabite city, later Ammonite.

82 Literally: "the daughter of many." NEB: "the crowded city." Apparently a gate in Heshbon.

83 The Hebrew word = nose, also "snorting, animosity, anger." Possibly implying: though her friendly eyes charm, anyone who arouses her displeasure must reckon with insurmountable resistance.

84 Hebrew uncertain. Literally: "your head upon you like Carmel."

85 Literally: "locks of your hair." Vulgate: "braided hair.":

86 Hebrew uncertain. The word used is only used here and in Genesis 30:38 where it means "watering troughs." Possibly "flowing ringlets."

87 As poetry the Hebrew seems awkward. Literally: "O love, in delight." Repeated it could mean, "O love, among delightful things."

88 *bbsnamamyiw* is used only here. It is similar to an Akkadian word for the top branches of a palm tree, thus perhaps meaning "hair" or "arms."

89 Literally: (89 = "nose." Emended by many scholars to read: (89 = breath. Scholars declare that if this stich is a euphemism it would read: "May the scent of your nipples be as sweet as apples."

90 Literally: "palate."

91 Literally: "down for my lover." "for my lover" is better deleted as a scribal error known as vertical dittography.

92 The Hebrew text of this verse is uncertain. LXX, Syriac and Vulgate translations are similar to the above. Hebrew: "lips of sleepers."

and spend the night in the villages.⁹³
12[H13] We will make an early start to see the vineyards
in order that we may see whether the vines have budded
and the blossoms have opened
and if the pomegranates are in bloom.

There I will give you my love.
13[H14] The mandrakes yield fragrance,⁹⁴
and all kinds of delicacies are near at hand,
freshly picked as well as those that have mellowed,
which I have hidden (*or, stored up*) for you, my darling.⁹⁵

<CHAPTER 8>

Maiden 1 If only you were truly a brother to me,⁹⁶
who suckled at my mother's breast!
Then I could kiss you openly on the street
and no one would taunt me.
2 Then it would be proper for me to lead you
to my mother's house
and into the chamber of the one who taught me the facts of life.
I would give you some spiced wine to drink;
the juice of my pomegranates.
(*or: I would bring you into my mother's house
where you would teach me to give you
spiced pomegranate wine.*)⁹⁷

Maiden 3 If only his left hand were under my head
and his right hand caressed me!

Lover 4 I urgently beg you, O maidens of Jerusalem,
do not awaken (*or, rouse*) my darling
until the appropriate time (*or, until she is ready*).

<*The Sixth Poem 8:5 - 15*>⁹⁸

Companions 5 Who is that coming from the wilderness (*or, desert*),
arm in arm with her lover?

93 The Hebrew reading is uncertain: 95, "villages" or "henna." If it means village it would be an unwallled village. It could also, however, mean "henna bushes." The latter seems logical since henna is mentioned in 1:14 and 4:13.

94 Mandrakes were highly prized aphrodisiacs with reproductive properties. Cf. Genesis 30:14-16.

95 Grammatically this stich could also be translated: "I have saved my love for you."

96 Literally: "Who will give you as a brother to me." An idiom for "Oh that you were really as a brother to me."

97 The Hebrew in this verse raises many complex questions concerning the intended meaning.

98 Some scholars feel this poem is comprised of a series of unconnected poems added by later editors. This theory, however, does not have total acceptance.

Lover (Heb.) Under the apple tree I roused you,⁹⁹
(Maiden, Syr.) there your mother conceived¹⁰⁰
for there you were conceived.

*Maiden*¹⁰¹ 6 Let me be a seal¹⁰² on your heart,
like a seal on your arm (*or, hand*).
Death is very powerful. So is our love.¹⁰³
Tenacious love (*or, complete devotion*) is as strong as the grave.
Its flame is as an intense fire;
a raging flame.
7 Vast waters cannot extinguish love.
No. Floods can not drown it.
Even though someone offered his possessions (*or, family wealth*)
to buy love
he would be laughed to scorn
(*or, the offer would be totally rejected*).

*Companions*¹⁰⁴ 8 We have a little sister¹⁰⁵
and her breasts have not developed yet.
This is how we can help our sister:
when she is asked for in marriage
(*or, when her courtship begins*).
9 If she is a wall¹⁰⁶
we will build for her a silver tower
and if she is a gate
we will protect her with panels of cedar
(*or, If she is physically not well developed*
we will make her attractive by decorating her.
If she becomes promiscuous
we will see that she is restrained.)¹⁰⁷.

Maiden 10 I was tall but underdeveloped,
and became fully developed.
Therefore he looked upon me
as one who was fully mature.¹⁰⁸

99 Perhaps implying an erotic location par excellence.

100 The Hebrew word can mean either "to conceive" or "to go into labor."

101 Scholars do not agree on who the speaker might be.

102 LXX: ἐγκολλητιον. 8,000 seals have been found from the period 1550 - 1200 BCE in Israel. A seal could also serve as an amulet. Cf. Jeremiah 22:24 where it is an almost inescapable declaration of an agreement that cannot be disregarded.

103 Literally: "love is as strong as death."

104 It is not clear who is speaking. Some scholars say the woman's brother, others young men who are interested, or the companions. The plural "we" is used throughout, thus the selection of "the companions."

105 Literally: "the sister belonging to us is young."

106 Literally: "wall she."

107 Cf. BDB. LXX speaks of carving or decorating the wall and door.

108 Literally: "like one who causes prosperity to go forth.": With slight emendation "like one who finds favor."

*Lover*¹⁰⁹ 11 Solomon had a vineyard at Baal - hamon;¹¹⁰
 he rented it out to tenants;
 who were to give him one thousand silver coins in payment.
 12 I have a vineyard, my very own.¹¹¹
 You, O Solomon, are welcome to those thousand pieces of silver,
 along with two hundred pieces of silver for those tending the fruit!

Lover 13 O, you who dwell in the gardens,¹¹²
 my companions are concerned about my beloved.
 Let me hear your voice!

Maiden 14 Hurry, my darling,
 be as swift as a gazelle,
 or a young stag
 on the sweet smelling mountains (*or, curves*).¹¹³

109 No common agreement has been reached about who is speaking. The grammar does not help in clarifying this.

110 Literally: "possession of abundance" or "Lord of the crowd. Cf. Judith 8:3 for a possible 2nd reference. LXX: Βηλαμιον

111 Literally: "my vineyard which is mine is before me."

112 The French Common Language Version: "my beautiful one who is found in the garden."

113 Again a euphemism with strong sexual elements.