



a Russian icon from the early 18th century, depicting King Solomon, often associated with the Song of Songs

Shir ha-shirim

THE SONG OF SONGS

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[The word **NOTE** points to a crux in translation, which is explored further. Click on **NOTE** to be taken to the discussion, and then on **RETURN** to come back to the text.]

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INTRODUCTION

Meaning

There can be few texts in Western literature that have generated a greater range of interpretation than the Old Testament book, *The Song of Songs*. In the 2,500 or more years of its existence, readings of it over the centuries have ranged from, at one extreme, an evocation of profound spiritual ecstasy to, at the other, a near-pornographic depiction of insatiable human lust. For much of that time, unquestionably, it has been read as a fundamentally religious text, fully justifying its inclusion in the canon of the Old Testament. For those of the Jewish faith, it has been seen as an allegory of the love between God and the people of Israel. For those of the Christian, an allegory of the relationship between Christ and his bride, the Church, or between Christ and the souls of those who believe in him. By natural extension, it has also been interpreted as a symbolic statement of the mystical longing of the human soul for union with God. Yet for all the religious power of the text, its more worldly dimensions have never been entirely eclipsed. Politically, it has been seen as an epithalamium, celebrating the marriage of Solomon to Pharaoh's daughter - or more generally, as a history of God's relationship with Israel from the Exodus to the coming of the Messiah. It has been construed as a poem about the triumph of human, plighted love over the seductions of worldly magnificence or, more recently, as a poem derived from ancient, Near Eastern fertility rites that were celebrated with music and ecstatic poetry. Most earthly and earthy of all, it has been read as a powerful and unalloyed celebration of erotic love - and erotic love, moreover, not between a married couple but between an unmarried man and woman, who consummate their passion in fierce delight.

Form

Such a range of interpretation, as Chana and Ariel Bloch point out [see Further Reading], may justifiably bring to mind Polonius' description of his actors: 'the best...in the world, either for tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral...' Yet if the meaning of the *Song* has been variously construed, scarcely less so has its form. The dramatic quality of the text has long been recognised. An unidentified man and woman speak in a vibrant present tense – to themselves in soliloquy, to each other in intimate dialogue, to a larger group of people who act as a kind of chorus. But for all the passionate immediacy of the words that the man and woman speak, this is not a drama or narrative in any conventional sense. Common expectations of what constitutes a beginning, middle, and end, are completely subverted. The poem begins without either introduction or explanation, in the middle of insatiable passion: 'O kiss me, kiss me with your mouth'. It then proceeds, not so much to *evolve*, as to *revolve*: around repeated images, words, phrases, refrains, that haunt the text in constant variation. And the poem ends, not with any conclusion to what has gone before, but with an entreaty to 'hurry, run away, my love' – though from what, and why, is never mentioned.

The form that the *Song* embraces is not, then, linear or systematic or developmental but, rather, episodic, shifting without declared transition from one scene, or voice, or event, to another, and then to yet another. Despite this, though, it would be misleading to suggest that the poem lacks cohesiveness or unity. Its coherence derives ultimately from what is a sustained tone of voice, a lyrical intensity that sings through each verse of the *Song* and which, even in its quieter tones, is not for a moment muted. Its form is perhaps best understood as that of an anthology, either drawing together the work of several different poets, or expressing the words of a single editor or redactor. But whatever its provenance, it is a collection of poems whose shape is underpinned by a single understanding: the ecstasy that love can bring.

Language

If asked to characterise the distinctive style in which *The Song of Songs* is written, few Hebraists would not emphasise its sonority and vibrancy, the terseness and economy of its utterance, and the enigmas and

obscurities that punctuate the text. These three features are worth exploring in a little detail.

The sonority of the Hebrew original is, of course, grounded in its origins as a text to be recited or sung, rather than read silently. The power of sound pervades the poem, whether through the richness of assonance and alliteration, or through the dramatic immediacy of voices speaking in a present tense. In many another text, this overwhelming sense of voices talking only in the here and now might generate a sense of confinement, constraint, even claustrophobia. But the language of the song continually thrusts outwards to draw in parallels, comparisons, similarities. Similes and metaphors from the natural world (animals, fauna, flora – their tastes and smells), together with human images from art, architecture, viniculture, constantly pulse through the verse. As the Blochs [see Further Reading] point out, it is remarkable how frequently the verb *damah* ('to be like') and its conjugations occur in the text. The lovers' language is centrifugal rather than centripetal in effect. It embraces the sensuous, voluptuous richness of the world outside rather than the spare loneliness of individual utterance.

Yet this richness, it should be emphasised, never overflows or becomes ungovernable. It is controlled by a terse economy of expression that permeates the entire *Song*. And nowhere is this terseness more evident than in the sudden jumps from one idea to another that punctuate the *Song*. Consider the following verses:

1:6 *Do not stare at me
because I am dark-skinned.
It was the sun that made me dark.*

*My brothers were angry with me,
and made me guard the vineyards.
But my own I did not guard.*

1:7 *You whom my soul loves,
tell me, where do you feed your sheep?
Where do you let them rest
in the heat of noon?
Why should I blindly search for them
among the flocks of your companions?*

What is notable about these verses is the disjunctions they express. Is, for example, the address in the first half of 1:6 to the same audience as in the second half, or to a different one? Is there any connection between the sun making the woman 'dark' and the anger of her brothers? If so, what is it? Why in any case should they be angry? Is guarding the vineyards the subsequent punishment they mete out? If so, in what way? And what causal connection, if any, exists between all these uncertainties and the questions about grazing and searching for sheep that take up the following verse?

This single illustration could be repeated time and again as the *Song* proceeds. Here, as elsewhere in the poem, there is no attempt to offer elaboration or explanation, to forge links, to place a syntax of co-ordination or sub-ordination upon what is often paratactical. Each thing that is voiced, so it seems, is in the moment of its voicing self-sufficiently eloquent.

Such terseness and economy of expression is not, of course, without its hazards, for it sometimes leads to uncertainties or downright obscurities of meaning that challenge, if not defeat, the bravest of interpreters. To take one example, the *Song* mentions over twenty-five varieties of plant; but few of them can be identified with absolute security. And so, the Hebrew flowers *havaššelet* and *šošannah* have been variously translated as rose, tulip, lily, crocus, hyacinth, narcissus, lotus, and wildflower. Likewise, the word *tappuah*, usually rendered as 'apple' in English versions, is almost certainly more accurately rendered as 'apricot', since apples were not native to Palestine in biblical times. To take another example, the *Song* is unusually full of words rarely used in the rest of the Old Testament, some of which occur only here. These instances of *hapax legomena* (i.e. words occurring only once in the entire Testament) pose particular problems for the translator. What exactly is the *'appiryon* that Solomon built (3:9), or the *šelahim* that is an orchard (4:13), or the *rehaṭim* in which a king is caught (7:6)? But a third example of obscurity eclipses even these uncertainties. In verse 6:12, the language and references are, to all intents and purposes, completely impenetrable:

lo' yada'ti na napsi
šamatni markebot 'ammi-nadib

Literally, these words mean:

I did not know myself

She put me in the chariots of 'ammi-nadib

Despite hundreds of possible interpretations, and countless suggested emendations, the words of this verse remain close to unfathomable. To characterise the version offered here as tenuous, is an under-statement. Several translators, in fact, simply omit the verse as untranslatable.

These three features (sonority, terseness, enigma) are, then, major and distinctive features of the language in which the *Song* is written. And in this translation, I have tried to respond to such qualities in the Hebrew original. The words of this version are intended to be read aloud, rather than silently, so that the pulse and rhythm of phrase and sentence are palpably heard by the ear, rather than half-perceived by the reading eye. No attempt is made to dilute the terseness of the original with false connectives or explanations that 'smooth over' the disjunctions that occur. And where there are ambiguities, they are presented as such, with a following **NOTE** that elaborates upon the nature of the uncertainty. Above all, I have tried to capture the passionate immediacy that the *Song* presents, the urgency of its language and its voice. With the towering resonance of the 1611 King James Version continually sounding in my ears, I have tried to capture a comparable resonance, whilst at the same time avoiding the mis-translations and dated language ('I am sick of love', 2:5; 'My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him', 5:4) that sometimes dilute its power. Dignity and passion are not words often brought together, but it is this combination of stylistic registers that I have sought to achieve.

Presentation of material

Given the different interpretations of the *Song's* meaning and form, it is scarcely surprising that it has been presented in a number of different ways. One major question is whether to present it as a piece of prose, or as a series of poems, and – a related issue – whether to retain the chapter divisions and verse numberings of the traditional Old Testament format, or to discard them. Although the 1611 Authorised Version, like several modern translations, presents the text as prose (albeit with titular 'verses'), that prose almost entirely misses the stresses of the original Hebrew line. As Marcia Falk points out [see Further Reading], the extended cadences of the Authorised Version are at radical variance with the relatively short units of the Hebrew line, which generally contains only two, three or four beats. In an attempt to

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catch something of this pulse, I have chosen here a form of free verse where lines are compacted rather than extended, and where lineation plays a vital role in conveying the passionate rhythms of the original. And so, the first verse of the Song does not read, as it might do in the Authorised Version,

O kiss me, kiss me with your mouth! For your loving is headier than wine.

but

*O kiss me,
kiss me with your mouth!
For your loving
is headier than wine.*

In terms of dividing the text into its different parts, I have tried to steer a middle course. For ease of reference, the traditional chapter and verse divisions are retained; but different spacings between lines and verses signal varying degrees of connectedness. And so, a single space between verses indicates a close thematic relationship, as in the second chapter's

- 11 For see, the winter is past,
the rains are over and gone.
- 12 Flowers appear on the earth.
Now is the time of the nightingale's song,
and the cooing of doves is heard in our land.
- 13 The fig trees sweeten their early fruit,
and the blossoming vines
spread their fragrance.

whereas a triple space indicates a substantial separateness, as in the last chapter's

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- 7 Great seas can not extinguish love.
There are no rivers that can make it drown.
If anyone shall try to purchase love
with all the wealth that they possess,
they will be utterly despised.

- 8 We have a young sister
who yet has no breasts.
What can we do for our sister
when suitors approach?

I have thought the impact of such visual spacing more subtle in its effect than an emphatic division of the text into separate short lyrics, varying in number depending on the edition, but almost always signalled by a new page. I have, though, followed the widespread modern convention of using different type-faces to identify different speakers. And so,

text in italics indicates that the unidentified woman in the poem is speaking

text in roman type indicates that the unidentified man in the poem is speaking

TEXT IN SMALL CAPITALS INDICATES A THIRD SPEAKER, WHICH IS ALMOST ALWAYS THE WOMEN OF JERUSALEM.

Acknowledgments

In addition to the translations and commentaries listed in the Further Reading section, I am particularly indebted to Tim Strauss, who applied his wide knowledge of Hebrew to a near-final draft of the translation, and who saved me from several errors. My warmest appreciation for the care of his advice.

Tim Chilcott
December 2009

AUTHORSHIP AND CHRONOLOGY

Authorship

Although *The Song of Songs* has been traditionally ascribed to King Solomon, his authorship is now widely discounted. Most modern scholars agree that the writer of the songs cannot be identified, and some indeed argue that the text may well have been composed by several different writers, possibly at several different times, rather than a single individual. The oral nature of the text's early transmission, too, compounds the uncertainties about authorship. Comparable discussions about the age of the author(s), his/her/their geographical location in town or countryside, in northern or southern Israel, and even their gender, have all proved speculative rather than decisive.

Chronology

If there is little certainty about the authorship of *The Song of Songs*, there is little, either, about the date of its composition, with different proposals ranging over seven centuries, from 950 to 200 BCE. A few scholars still date the *Song* early, to the 10th century BCE, when the reign of King Solomon was hailed as a golden age. But most now place it very much later, probably in the Hellenistic period of around the third century BCE. Several aspects of the language in the *Song* – the Aramaic influence, the similarity to Mishnaic Hebrew, the influence of a spoken idiom, the use of foreign loan-words – all point to such a dating; and the parallels between the *Song* and the pastoral idylls of Theocritus (who wrote in the first half of the third century BCE) have long been recognised.

The Song of Songs

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The material for this translation is presented in four ways:

- | | |
|---------------------------|---|
| <i>verso</i> pages | a) the original Hebrew text, to be read from right to left. |
| facing <i>recto</i> pages | b) <i>then, in italics, a completely literal, word-for-word rendering of a), to be read from left to right.</i>
c) then, in roman type, a rendering of b) into a clear, though prosaic English. |
| concluding pages | d) the final translation into a resonant English. Different type faces indicate the three main speakers; and the word NOTE points to a crux in translation, which is explored further. Click on NOTE to be taken to the discussion, and then on RETURN to come back to the text. |

א שִׁיר הַשִּׁירִים, אֲשֶׁר לְשִׁלְמוֹה.

ב יִשְׁקֵנִי שִׁיקוֹת פִּיהוּ, כִּי-טוֹבִים דְּדִיךְ מִיַּיִן.

ג לְרִיחַ שְׁמָנֶיךָ טוֹבִים, שְׁמֹן תּוֹרַק שְׁמֶךָ; עַל-כֵּן, עֲלָמוֹת אֶהְבֹּךָ.

ד מְשַׁכְנֵי, אַחֲרֶיךָ נְרוּצָה; הִבִּיאֵנִי הַמֶּלֶךְ חֲדָרָיו, נְגִילָה וְנִשְׂמָחָה בְּךָ—
נִזְכִּירָה דְּדִיךְ מִיַּיִן, מִיִּשְׁרַיִם אֶהְבֹּךָ. {פ}

ה שְׁחוֹרָה אֲנִי וְנֹאנָה, בְּנוֹת יְרוּשָׁלַם; כְּאֶהְלֵי קֶדָר, כִּירִיעוֹת שְׁלֹמֹה.

ו אֶל-תִּרְאוּנֵי שְׂאֵנֵי שְׁחַרְחָרְתִּי, שֶׁשָׁזְפַתְנִי הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ; בְּנֵי אִמִּי נִחְרוּ-בִּי,
שְׁמַנִּי נִטְרָה אֶת-הַכְּרָמִים--כְּרָמֵי שְׁלִי, לֹא נִטְרָתִי.

1:1 *SONG OF / THE SONGS / THAT / OF SOLOMON*

THE SONG OF SONGS THAT IS SOLOMON'S

1:2 *O that he would kiss me / with kisses of / mouth of him / for /
delightful ones / loves of you / more than wine*

O that he would kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, for your
loving is more delightful than wine.

1:3 *in fragrance of / perfumes of you / pleasing ones / perfume / she is
poured out / name of you / for this / maidens / they love you*

As regards scent, your oils are good; your name is oil poured out.
For this, young women love you.

1:4 *take away me / with you / let us hurry / he brought me / the king /
chambers of him / we rejoice / and we delight / in you / we will
praise / loves of you / more than wine / right ones / they adore you*

Take me with you, and let us run. The king has brought me into his
chambers. Let us exult and rejoice in you; let us recount *or*
proclaim *or* extol your loving more than wine. Indeed *or* truly *or*
rightly they love you.

1:5 *Dark / I / yet [and?] lovely / daughters of / Jerusalem / like tents of
/ Kedar / like tent curtains of / Solomon*

Black *or* dark I am and *or* yet beautiful, daughters of Jerusalem,
like the tents of Kedar, like the curtains *or* tapestries of Solomon.

1:6 *not you see me / because I / dark / because she darkened me / the
sun / sons of / mother of me / they were angry / with me / they made
me / one caring for / the vineyards / vineyard of me / that to me /
not / I cared for*

ז הגידה לי, שאהבה נפשי, איכה תרעה, איכה תרביץ בצהרלים ;
שלמה אהיה כעטיה, על עדרי חבריך.

ח אם-לא תדעי לך, היפה בנשים ; צאי-לך בעקבי הצאן, ורעי את-
גדיתך, על, משכנות הרעים. {פ}

ט לססתי ברכבי פרעה, דמיתך רעיתי.

י נאוו לחיך בתרים, צנאך בחרוזים.

יא תורי זהב נעשה-לך, עם נקדות הכסף.

Do not stare at me because I am dark; the sun burnt me. My mother's sons were angry with me. They made me care for the vineyards, but I did not care for mine.

1:7 *tell / to me / whom she loves / self of me / where / you graze flock / where / you give rest / at the midday / that why / I should be / like one being veiled / beside / flocks of / friends of you*

Tell me, the one whom my soul loves, where do *or* will you graze your flock, where do *or* will you give them rest at noon, why should I be veiled *or* lose my way among the flocks of your companions?

1:8 *if not / you know / to you / the beautiful one / among the women / follow / to you / after tracks of / the sheep / and graze / young goats of you / by / tents of / the ones being shepherds*

If you do not know, the beautiful one among women, follow the tracks of the sheep, graze your young goats by the tents of the shepherds.

1:9 *to mare of me / in chariots of / Pharaoh / I liken you / darling of me*

To a mare among the chariots of Pharaoh, I liken you, my love.

1:10 *they are beautiful / cheeks of you / with the earrings / neck of you / with the strings of jewels*

Beautiful are your cheeks with earrings, your neck with strings of jewels *or* beads *or* shells.

1:11 *earrings of gold / we will make / for you / with / studs of / the silver*

Gold earrings we will make for you with dots *or* points *or* studs of silver.

יב עד-שֶׁהִמְלֵךְ, בְּמִסְבּוֹ, נִרְדִּי, נָתַן רִיחוֹ.

יג צָרוֹר הַמֹּר דּוֹדִי לִי, בֵּין שְׁדֵי זְלוֹן.

יד אֲשַׁכֵּל הַכֶּפֶר דּוֹדִי לִי, בְּכַרְמֵי עֵין גֵּדִי. {ס}

טו הֵנָּה זָפָה רַעֲיָתִי, הֵנָּה זָפָה עֵינֶיךָ יוֹנִים.

טז הֵנָּה זָפָה דּוֹדִי אֶף נָעִים, אֶף-עַרְשֵׁנוּ רַעֲנָנָה.

יז קְרוֹת בְּתֵינֵנוּ אֶרְזִים, רַחֲיִטְנוּ (רַהֲיִטְנוּ) בְּרוֹתֵים.

1:12 *while that the king / at table of him / spikenard of me / he spread / fragrance of him*

While the king was at his table, my perfume spread its fragrance.

1:13 *sachet of / the myrrh / love of me / to me / between / breasts of me / he rests*

My lover is to me a sachet of myrrh resting between my breasts.

1:14 *cluster of / the henna blossom / love of me / to me / from vineyards of / En / Gedi*

My lover is to me a cluster *or* sheath of henna blossoms from the vineyards of Ein Gedi.

1:15 *see you / beautiful / darling of me / see you / beautiful / eyes of you / doves*

How beautiful you are, my darling, how beautiful. Your eyes are doves.

1:16 *see you / handsome / lover of me / how / charming / indeed / verdant / bed of us*

How handsome you are, my love, how charming. Our bed is verdant.

1:17 *beams of / houses of us / cedars / rafter of us / firs*

The beams of our houses are cedars; our rafters are firs *or* pines *or* cypresses *or* junipers.

א אָנִי חֲבַצְלֵת הַשָּׁרוֹן, שׁוֹשַׁנַּת הָעֲמָקִים.

ב כְּשׁוֹשַׁנָּה בֵּין הַחוֹחִים, כֹּן כַּעֲתִי בֵּין הַבָּנוֹת.

ג כְּתַפּוּחַ בְּעֵצֵי הַיַּעַר, כֹּן דֹדֵי בֵּין הַבָּנִים ; בְּצֵלוֹ חֲמֻדָּתִי וְיִשְׁבֵּתִי, וּפְרִיֹ
מְתוֹק לְחֻכִּי.

ד הִבִּיאֲנִי אֶל-בַּיִת הַיַּיִן, וְדָגְלוּ עָלַי אֶהְבָּה.

ה סִמְכוּנִי, בְּאֲשִׁישׁוֹת--רַפְּדוּנִי, בַּתְּפוּחִים : כִּי-חֹלֵת אֶהְבָּה, אָנִי.

ו שְׂמְאֵלוֹ תַחַת לְרֹאשִׁי, וַיְמִינוּ תַחֲבֹקְנִי.

2:1 *I / rose of / the Sharon / lily of / the valleys*

I am the rose *or* tulip *or* lily *or* crocus *or* wildflower of Sharon, the lily *or* lotus *or* hyacinth *or* narcissus of the valley.

2:2 *like lily / among / the thorns / so / darling of me / among / the maidens*

Like a lily *or* lotus *or* hyacinth *or* narcissus among thistles *or* thorns is my darling among the maidens.

2:3 *like apple tree / among trees of / the forest / so / lover of me / among / the young men / in shade of him / I delight / and I sit / and fruit of him / sweet / to taste of me*

Like an apple *or* apricot tree among the trees of the forest is my lover among the young men. I delight *or* delighted and I sit *or* sat in the shade of him *or* it, and his fruit is sweet to taste.

2:4 *he took me / to hall of / the banquet / and banner of him / over me / love*

He took me to the house of wine, his banner over me [being] love.

2:5 *strengthen me / with the raisins / refresh me / with the apples / for being faint / I / love*

Prop me up *or* make my bed *or* cover me with raisins, cushion me *or* prop me up among apricots, for I am sick with love.

2:6 *left arm of him / under / to head of me / and right arm of him / she embraces me*

His left hand under my head and his right embracing me

ז השִׁבַּעְתִּי אֶתְכֶם בְּנוֹת יְרוּשָׁלַם, בַּצְּבָאוֹת, או, בְּאֵילֹת הַשָּׁדָה : אִם-
תַּעֲרִירוּ וְאִם-תַּעֲזֹרוּ אֶת-הָאֲהָבָה, עַד שֶׁתִּחַפֵּץ. {ס}

ח קוֹל דּוֹדִי, הִנֵּה-זֶה בָּא ; מְדַלֵּג, עַל-הַהָרִים--מִקְפָּץ, עַל-הַגְּבָעוֹת.

ט דּוֹמָה דּוֹדִי לַצִּבִּי, וְלַעֲפָר אֶאֱיִלִים ; הִנֵּה-זֶה עוֹמֵד, אַחֵר כְּתִילָנוּ—
מִשְׁגִּיחַ מִן-הַחַלְנוֹת, מִצִּיץ מִן-הַחַרְכִּים.

י עָנָה דּוֹדִי, וְאָמַר לִי : קוּמִי לָךְ רַעֲיָתִי יָפְתִי, וּלְכִי-לָךְ.

יא כִּי-הִנֵּה הַסֶּתֶו, עָבַר ; הַגֶּשֶׁם, חָלַף הַלַּךְ לוֹ.

יב הַנִּצְּנִים נִרְאוּ בְּאֶרֶץ, עַת הַזְּמִיר הִגִּיעַ ; וְקוֹל הַתּוֹר, נִשְׁמַע בְּאֶרְצֵנוּ.

2:7 *I charge / you / daughters of / Jerusalem / by gazelles / and / by
does of / the field / not you arouse / and not you awaken / the love /
until / that she desires*

I charge you, daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles and does of the field, that you do not or never awaken and never arouse love until it desires.

2:8 *sound of / lover of me / look there / he comes / leaping / across the
mountains / bounding / over the hills*

The voice or sound of my lover, here he or it comes, leaping across the mountains, bounding over the hills.

2:9 *one being like / lover of me / to gazelle / or / to young deer of / the
stags / look here / standing / behind / wall of us / gazing / through /
the windows / peering / through / the lattices*

My lover resembles a gazelle or a young deer. Look, there he stands behind our wall, gazing through the windows, peering through the lattices or gaps or crevices.

2:10 *he spoke / lover of me / and he said / to me / arise / to you / darling
of me / beautiful one of me / and come to you*

My lover responded and said to me, 'Arise, my darling, my beautiful one, and come with me.'

2:11 *for see / the winter / he passed / the rain / he is over / he went / to
him*

See, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone.

2:12 *the flowers / they appear / on the ground / season of / the song / he
came / and sound of / the dove / he is heard / in land of us*

The flowers appear on the ground; the season of singing has come; the sound of the dove is heard in our land.

יג התאנה חנטה פגיה, והגפנים סמדר נתנו ריח; קומי לכי (לך)

רעיתי יפתי, ולכי-לך. {ס}

יד יונתי בחגוי הסלע, בסתר המדרגה, הראיני את-מראיך, השמיעני

את-קולך: כי-קולך ערב, ומראיך נאוה. {ס}

טו אֲחֻז־וּלְנוּ, שְׁעָלִים--שְׁעָלִים קִטְנִים, מְחַבְּלִים כְּרָמִים; וּכְרָמֵינוּ,

סְמֹדֵר.

טז דודי לי נאני לו, הרעה בשושנים.

יז עד שִׁנְפוּחַ הַיּוֹם, וְנִסּוּ הַצִּלְלִים: סֵב דָּמָה-לְךָ דּוּדִי לְצַבִּי, אוּ לְעַפְרֵי

הָאֲזִלִּים--עַל-הָרֵי בְּתָר. {ס}

2:13 *the fig tree / she forms / early fruits of her / and the vines / blossom / they spread / fragrance / arise / come / darling of me / beautiful one of me / and come to me*

The fig tree forms its early fruit, and the vines in blossom spread fragrance. Arise, come, my darling, my beautiful one, come with me.

2:14 *dove of me / in clefts of / the rock / in hiding place of / the mountainside / show me / faces of you / let hear me / voice of you / for voice of you / sweet / and faces of you / lovely*

My dove in the clefts of the rock, in the hiding places of the mountainside, show me your face. Let me hear your voice, for your voice is sweet and your face lovely.

2:15 *catch for us / foxes / foxes / little ones / ones ruining / vineyards / indeed vineyards of us / bloom*

Catch for us the foxes, the little foxes ruining the vineyards, our vineyards that bloom indeed.

2:16 *lover of me / to me / and I / to him / the one browsing / among the lilies*

My lover is mine and I his, the one browsing among the lilies.

2:17 *until / when he breaks / the day / and they flee / the shadows / turn / be like to you / lover of me / to gazelle / or / to young deer of / the stags / on hills of / ruggedness*

Until the day breaks and the shadows flee, turn away or be like, my lover, the gazelle or a young deer of a stag on the rugged hills.

א על-משכבי, בלילות, בקשתי, את שאהבה נפשי; בקשתי, ולא
מצאתיו.

ב אקומה נא ואסובבה בעיר, בשוקים וברחובות--אבקשה, את
שאהבה נפשי; בקשתי, ולא מצאתיו.

ג מצאוני, השמרים, הסבבים, בעיר: את שאהבה נפשי, ראיתם.

ד כמעט, שעברתי מהם, עד שמצאתי, את שאהבה נפשי; אחזתי,
ולא ארפנו--עד-שהביאתי אל-בית אמי, ואל-חדר הורתי.

ה השבעתי אתכם בנות ירושלים, בצבאות, או, באילות השדה: אם-
תעירו ואם-תעוררו את-האהבה, עד שתחפץ. {ס}

3:1 *on bed of me / in the nights / I looked for / [the one] / whom she
loves / heart of me / I looked for him / but not / I found him*

All night long on my bed, I looked for the one whom my heart
loves. I looked for him but I did not find him.

3:2 *I will get up / now / and I will go about / through the city / through
the streets / and through the squares / I will search for / [the one] /
whom she loves / heart of me / I looked for him / but not / I found
him*

I will get up now and will go about the city, through the streets and
through the squares, and I will search for the one my heart loves. I
looked for him but I did not find him.

3:3 *they found me / the men watching / the ones going around / in the
city / [the one] / whom she loves / heart of me / you saw*

The watchmen found me as they went about in the city. 'Have you
seen the one I love?'

3:4 *as scarcely / that I passed / from them / when / that I found / [the
one / whom she loves / heart of me / I held him / and not / I would
let go him / till when I brought him / to house of / mother of me /
and to room of / one conceiving me*

Scarcely had I passed them than I found the one my heart loves. I
held him and would not let him go until I brought him to my
mother's house, to the room of the one who conceived me.

3:5 *I charge / you / daughters of / Jerusalem / by gazelles / and / by
does of / the field / not you arouse / and not you awaken / [the one]
/ the love / until / that she desires*

I charge you, daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles and does of
the field, that you do not or never awaken and do not or never
arouse love until it desires.

ו מי זאת, עלה מן-המדבר, כתימרות, עשן: מקטרת מר ולבונה,
מכל אבקת ריכל.

ז הנה, מטתו שלשלמה--ששים גברים, סביב לה: מגברי, ישראל.

ח בלם אחזי חרב, מלמדי מלחמה; איש חרבו על-ירכו, מפחד
בלילות. {ס}

ט אפריון, עשה לו המלך שלמה--מעצי, הלבנון.

י עמודיו, עשה כסף, רפידתו זהב, מרפבו ארגמן; תוכו רצוף אהבה,
מבנות ירושלים.

יא צאנה וראינה בנות ציון, במלך שלמה--בעטרה, שעטרה-לו אמו
ביום חתנתו, וביום, שמחת לבו. {ס}

3:6 *who / this / coming up / from the desert / like columns of / smoke / being perfumed of / myrrh / and incense / from all of / spice of / one being merchant*

Who is this rising from the desert like columns of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and incense from all the spices of the merchant?

3:7 *look / carriage of him / that to Solomon / sixty / warriors / around / about her / from noble ones of / Israel*

Look, here is Solomon's carriage or bed, with sixty warriors around it, the noblest of Israel,

3:8 *all of them / ones wearing of / sword / ones being experienced of / battle / each sword of him / at side of him / for terror / of the nights*

all of them wearing a sword, all experienced in battle, each with his sword at his side because of the danger of the nights.

3:9 *carriage / he made / for him / the king / Solomon / from woods of / the Lebanon*

A carriage or palace or throne room he, king Solomon, made for himself out of wood from Lebanon.

3:10 *posts of him / he made / silver / base of him / gold / seat of him / purple / interior of him / being inlaid / love / by daughters of / Jerusalem*

Its pillars he made silver, its base gold, its seat purple, its interior paved with love by or from the daughters of Jerusalem.

3:11 *come out / and look / daughters of / Zion / at the king / Solomon / with the crown / which she crowned / upon him / mother of him / on day of / wedding of him / on day of / rejoicing of / heart of him*

Come out and look, daughters of Zion, at king Solomon with the crown that his mother set upon him, on the day of his wedding, the day his heart rejoiced.

א הַנֶּנֶךְ יָפָה רַעֲיָתִי, הַנֶּנֶךְ יָפָה--עֵינֶיךָ יוֹנִים, מִבַּעַד לְצַמְתְּךָ; שְׁעָרֶיךָ כְּעֵדֶר
הָעִזִּים, שֶׁגִּלְשׁוּ מִהַר גִּלְעָד.

ב שֵׁנֶיךָ כְּעֵדֶר הַקְּצוּבוֹת, שְׁעָלוּ מִן-הַרְחָצָה: שְׁכָלָם, מִתְאַיְמוֹת,
וְשִׁכְלָה, אִין בָּהֶם.

ג כַּחוּט הַשְּׁנִי שִׁפְתוֹתֶיךָ, וּמִדְּבַרְךָ נְאוּהָ; כְּפָלַח הַרְמוֹן רְקוֹתֶךָ, מִבַּעַד
לְצַמְתְּךָ.

ד כְּמִגְדַל דָּוִד צְנֹאֲרֶךָ, בְּנוֹי לְתִלְפִיּוֹת; אֶלְף הַמִּגֵּן תִּלְוִי עֲלִיו, כֹּל שְׁלֹטֵי
הַגְּבֻרִים.

ה שְׁנֵי שְׁדֵיךָ כְּשְׁנֵי עֶפְרַיִם, תְּאוּמֵי צְבִיָּה, הָרוּעִים, בְּשׁוֹשַׁנִּים.

4:1 *see you / beautiful / darling of me / see you / beautiful / eyes of you / doves / at behind / to veil of you / hair of you / like flock of / the goats / that they descend / from Mount of / Gilead*

See, you are beautiful, my darling; see, you are beautiful. Your eyes behind your veil *or* locks [of hair] are doves. Your hair is like a flock of goats descending from Mount Gilead.

4:2 *teeth of you / like flock of / the ones being shorn / that they come up / from the washing / that each of them / ones having twins / and alone / there is not / of them*

Your teeth are like a flock of those that are shorn and have come up from the pond *or* washing place *or* being washed. Each of them has twins, and not one of them is alone *or* bereaved of offspring.

4:3 *like ribbon of / the scarlet / lips of you / and mouths of you / lovely / like half of / the pomegranate / temple of you / at behind / to veil of you*

Your lips are like a scarlet ribbon, and your mouth *or* voice *or* speaking is lovely. Your cheeks *or* temple *or* forehead behind your veil is/are like half of a pomegranate.

4:4 *like tower of / David / neck of you / one being built / with elegance / thousand of / the shield / being hung / on him / all of / shields of / the warriors*

Like the tower of David is your neck built in courses *or* terraces *or* wondrously *or* magnificently *or* to perfection. A thousand bucklers *or* shields hang upon it, all the shields of the warriors.

4:5 *two of / breasts of you / like two of / fawns / twins of / gazelle / the ones browsing / among the lilies*

Your two breasts are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle that browse *or* graze among the lilies.

ו עד שִׁיפּוּחַ הַיּוֹם, וְנָסוּ הַצָּלְלִים--אֵלַי לִי אֶל-הַר הַמּוֹר, וְאֶל-גְּבַעַת
הַלְבוֹנָה.

ז בְּלֶךְ יָפָה כַּעֲיָתִי, וּמוֹם אֵין בָּךְ. { ס }

ח אֲתִי מִלְבָּנוֹן כָּלָה, אֲתִי מִלְבָּנוֹן תְּבוֹאִי; תִּשׁוּרֵי מִרְאֵשׁ אֲמָנָה,
מִרְאֵשׁ

שְׁנִיר וְחֶרְמוֹן, מִמְעַנּוֹת אֲרָיוֹת, מִהַרְרֵי נְמָרִים.

ט לִבְבַתְּנִי, אַחֲתֵי כָלָה; לִבְבַתְּנִי בֶאֱחָד (בְּאֲחָת) מְעֵינֶיךָ, בְּאֶחָד עֵינֶיךָ
מִצְוֹרְנֶיךָ.

י מֵה-יָפּוּ דְדִיךָ, אַחֲתֵי כָלָה; מֵה-טִבּוֹ דְדִיךָ מֵיַיִן, וְרִיחַ שְׁמָנֶיךָ מִכָּל-
בְּשָׂמִים.

יא נֹפֶת תִּטְפֹּנָה שְׁפָתוֹתֶיךָ, כָּלָה; דְּבַשׁ וְחֶלֶב תַּחַת לְשׁוֹנֶיךָ, וְרִיחַ

4:6 *until / when he breaks / the day / and they flee / the shadows / I will go / to me / to mountain of / the myrrh / and to hill of / the incense*

Before the day breaks and the shadows flee, I will go to the mountain of myrrh and to the hill of frankincense.

4:7 *all of you / beautiful / darling of me / and flaw / there is not / in you*

You are wholly beautiful, my darling, and there is no flaw in you.

4:8 *with me / from Lebanon / bride / with me / from Lebanon / you come / you descend / from crest of / Amana / from top of / Senir / even Hermon / from dens of / lions / from mountains of / leopards*

Come with me from Lebanon, my bride. Descend from the crest of Amana, from the top of Senir, [the summit] of Hermon, from the lions' dens and the mountain haunts of leopards.

4:9 *you stole heart of me / sister of me / bride / you stole heart of me / with one / from eyes of you / with one of / jewel of / of necklaces of you*

You have stolen away *or* ravished my heart, my sister, [my] bride. You have stolen away *or* ravished my heart, with one glance of your eyes, with one jewel of your necklace.

4:10 *how they are delightful / loves of you / sister of me / bride / how they are pleasing / loves of you / more than wine / and fragrance of / perfumes of you / more than any of spices*

How delightful is your love, my sister, my bride. How pleasing is your love, more than wine, and the fragrance of your perfume, more than any spice.

4:11 *honeycomb / they drop / lips of you / bride / honey / and milk / under / tongue of you / and fragrance of / garments of you / like fragrance of / Lebanon*

שְׁלֹמֹתֶיךָ כְּרִיחַ לְבָנוֹן. {ס}

יב גֹן נְעוּל, אַחֲתֵי כֶלֶה; גַּל נְעוּל, מַעְגֵן חֲתוּם.

יג שְׁלַחֲתֶיךָ פְּרֻדֹס רִמּוֹנִים, עֵם פְּרֵי מְגָדִים: כְּפָרִים, עֵם-נֶרְדִים.

יד נֶרְדַּ וְכַרְפֹּס, קָנָה וְקַנְמוֹן, עֵם, כָּל-עֲצֵי לְבוֹנָה; מֵר, וְאַהֲלוֹת, עֵם,
כָּל- אֲשֵׁי בְשָׂמִים.

טו מַעְגֵן גְּנִים, בְּאֵר מַיִם חַיִּים; וְנִזְלִים, מִן-לְבָנוֹן.

טז עוֹרֵי צִפּוֹן וּבּוֹאֵי תִימֹן, הַפִּיחֵי גְנֵי יִזְלוּ בְשָׂמֵיו; יְבֵא דוֹדֵי לְגַנּוֹ,
וַיֵּאכַל פְּרֵי מְגָדָיו.

Your lips drip honey, my bride. Honey and milk are under your tongue; and the fragrance of your garments is like the fragrance of Lebanon.

4:12 *garden / being locked / sister of me / bride / spring / being enclosed / fountain / being sealed*

[You are] a garden locked up, my sister and bride, a spring enclosed, a sealed fountain.

4:13 *plants of you / orchard of / pomegranates / with / fruit of / choice ones / hennas / with nards*

Your plants or branches are an orchard of pomegranates, with choice fruits, with henna and nard.

4:14 *nard / and saffron / calamus / and cinnamon / with / all of trees of / incense / myrrh / and aloes / and / all of finest ones of / spices*

Nard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, with every kind of incense tree, with myrrh and aloes, and all the finest spices.

4:15 *fountain of / gardens / well of / waters / flowing ones / even ones streaming down / from Lebanon*

[You are] a fountain of gardens, a well of flowing water streaming down from Lebanon.

4:16 *awake / north wind / and come / south wind / blow on / garden of me / that they may spread / fragrances of him / let him come / lover of me / into garden of him / and let him taste / fruit of / choice ones of him*

Awake, north wind, and come, south wind. Blow on my garden, that its fragrance may be spread. Let my lover come into his garden and taste its choice fruit.

א בָּאתִי לְגַנִּי, אַחֹתִי כָלָה--אָרִיתִי מוֹרֵי עֵם-בְּשָׁמִי, אֶכְלֶתִי יַעְרֵי עֵם-
דְּבַשִּׁי שְׁתִּיתִי יַיִן עֵם-חֶלְבִי; אֶכְלוּ רַעִים, שְׁתוּ וְשָׁכְרוּ דוֹדִים. { ס }

ב אֲנִי יֹשְׁנָה, וְלִבִּי עָר; קוֹל דְּוִדֵי דוֹפֵק, פִּתְחֵי-לִי אַחֹתִי רַעֲיָתִי יוֹנָתִי
תַּמְתִּי--שָׁרְאֲשִׁי נִמְלֵא-טָל, קִנְצוֹתֵי רְסִיסֵי לֵילָה.

ג פָּשַׁטְתִּי, אֶת-כִּתְנֹנִתִי--אֵיכָכָה, אֶלְבָּשְׁנָה; רַחֲצֵתִי אֶת-רַגְלִי, אֵיכָכָה
אֶטְנַפֵּם.

ד דוֹדִי, שָׁלַח יָדוֹ מִן-הַחֹר, וַיַּעֲזֵב, הַמּוֹ עָלָיו.

ה קָמַתִי אֲנִי, לִפְתּוֹחַ לְדוֹדִי; וַיִּדְּי נְטִפוֹ-מוֹר, וַאֲצַבְעֵתִי מוֹר עֲבָר, עַל,
כַּפּוֹת הַמְּנַעוֹל.

5:1 *I came / into garden of me / sister of me / bride / I gathered / myrrh
of me / with spice of me / I ate / honeycomb of me / and honey of
me / I drank / wine of me / and milk of me / eat / friends / drink /
and drink fill / lovers*

I have come into my garden, my sister and bride. I have gathered my myrrh with my spice. I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey. I have drunk my wine and my milk. Eat, [my] friends, and lovers, drink your fill of or get drunk on love.

5:2 *I / asleep / but heart of me / being awake / sound of / lover of me /
knocking / open to me / sister of me / darling of me / dove of me /
flawless one of me / for head of me / being dew-drenched / hairs of
me / dampnesses of / night*

I was asleep but my heart was awake. The sound of my lover knocking. Open up to me, my sister, my darling, my dove, my flawless one. My head is drenched with dew, my hair with the dampness of night.

5:3 *I took off / [the one] robe of me / indeed / must I put her on / I
washed / [the one] feet of me / indeed / must I soil them*

I have taken off my robe – must I put it on again? I have washed my feet – must I soil them again?

5:4 *lover of me / he thrust / hand of him / through the latch opening /
and hearts of me / they pounded / for him*

My lover thrust his hand through the latch-opening, and my heart or bowels stirred for him.

5:5 *I arose / I / to open / for lover of me / and hands of me / they
dripped myrrh / and fingers of me / myrrh / flowing / on / handles
of / the lock*

I arose to open for my lover, and my hands dripped myrrh, myrrh flowing down my fingers on to the handles of the lock.

ו פתחתי אני לדודי, ודודי חמק עבר; נפשי, יצאה בדברו--בקשתיהו
ולא מצאתיהו, קראתיו ולא ענני.

ז מצאני השמרים הסבבים בעיר, הכוני פצעוני; נשאו את-רדידי
מעלי, שמרי החמות.

ח השבעתי אתכם, בנות ירושלים: אם-תמצאו, את-דודי--מה-תגידו
לו, שחולת אהבה אני.

ט מה-דודך מדוד, היפה בנשים: מה-דודך מדוד, שככה השבעתנו.

י דודי צח ואדום, דגול מרבבה.

5:6 *I opened / I / for lover of me / but lover of me / he left / he went / heart of me / she went out / when to speak him / I looked for him / but not / I found him / I called him / but not / he answered*

I opened for my lover; but my lover had left, he was gone. My heart went out to him when he spoke. I looked for him but I did not find him. I called him but he did not answer.

5:7 *they found-me / the men watching / the ones going around / in the city / they beat me / they bruised me / they took / [the one] cloak of me / from on me / ones watching of / the walls*

The watchmen found me as they went about the city. They beat me, and bruised me; they took away my cloak, those watchmen of the walls.

5:8 *I charge / you / daughters of / Jerusalem / if you find / [the one] lover of me / what will you tell / to him / that one being faint of / love / I*

I charge you, daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my lover, what will you tell him? That I am faint with love.

5:9 *how beloved of you / better than beloved / the beautiful one / among the women / how beloved of you / better than beloved / that so / you charge us*

How is your beloved better than other beloveds, most beautiful of women? How is your beloved better than other beloveds, that you charge us so?

5:10 *lover of me / white / and red / being outstanding / among ten thousand*

My lover is radiant and ruddy, outstanding among ten thousand.

יא ראשו, כְּתָם פָּז; קַנְצוֹתָיו, תִּלְתְּלִים, שְׁחָרוֹת, כְּעוֹרֵב.

יב עֵינָיו, כְּיוֹנִים עַל-אַפְיָקֵי מָיִם; רְחֻצוֹת, בְּחֶלֶב--יִשְׁבוֹת, עַל-מִלָּאת.

יג לְחָזוֹ כְּעָרוֹגַת הַבֶּשֶׂם, מְגִדְלוֹת מְרֻקָּחִים; שְׁפָתוֹתָיו, שׁוֹשְׁנִים—
נְטָפוֹת, מוֹר עֵבֶר.

יד יָדָיו גְּלִילֵי זָהָב, מְמַלְאִים בִּתְרֻשֵׁי־שֵׁשׁ; מַעַו עֲשֵׂת שֵׁן, מְעַלְפֵת
סַפִּירִים.

טו שׁוֹקֵיו עֲמוּדֵי שֵׁשׁ, מְיֻסָּדִים עַל-אֲדָנֵי-פָּז; מְרֻאָהוּ, כְּלִבְנוֹן--בְּחוֹר,
כְּאֲרָזִים.

טז חִכּוֹ, מִמֶּתְקִים, וְכֹלּוֹ, מִחֲמַדִּים; זֶה דוֹדֵי וְזֶה רַעִי, בְּנוֹת יְרוּשָׁלָּם.

5:11 *head of him / gold / purest gold / hairs of him / wavy ones / black ones / as the raven*

His head is purest gold, his hair wavy and as black as the raven.

5:12 *eyes of him / like doves / by streams of / waters / ones being washed / in the milk / ones being mounted / like jewel*

His eyes are like doves by streams of water, bathed in milk, mounted like a jewel.

5:13 *cheeks of him / like bed of / the spice / towers of / perfumes / lips of him / lilies / ones dripping / myrrh / flowing*

His cheeks are like beds of spices, towers of perfume. His lips are like lilies dripping with myrrh.

5:14 *arms of him / rods of / gold / ones being set / with the chrysolite / bodies of him / polished work of / ivory / one being decorated / sapphires*

His arms are rods of gold set with chrysolite. His body or belly is a like polished block of ivory, decorated with sapphires.

5:15 *legs of him / pillars of / marble / ones being set / on bases of pure gold / appearance of him / like the Lebanon / one being choice / as the cedars*

His legs are pillars of marble set on bases of pure gold. His appearance is like the Lebanon, choice as its cedars.

5:16 *mouth of him / sweetnesses / and all of him / lovely ones / this / lover of me / and this / friend of me / daughters of / Jerusalem*

His mouth is sweetness [itself], and all of him is lovely. This is my lover, this is my friend, daughters of Jerusalem.

א אנה הלך דודך, היפה בנשים; אנה פנה דודך, ונבקשנו עמך.

ב דודי נכד לגנו, לערבות הבשם—לרעות, בגנים, וללקט, שושנים.

ג אני לדודי ודודי לי, הרעה בשושנים. {ס}

ד יפה את רעיתי פתרצה, נאווה כירושלם; אימה, פנדגלות.

ה הסבי עיניך מנגדי, שהם הרהיבני; שעריך כעדר העזים, שגלשו מן-
הגלעד.

ו שניך כעדר הרחלים, שעלו מן-הרחצה: שכלם, מתאימות, ושכלה,
אין בהם.

6:1 *to where? / he went / lover of you / the beautiful one / among the women / to where? / he turned / lover of you / that we may look for him / with you*

Where has your lover gone, most beautiful of women? Where did your lover turn that we may look for him with you?

6:2 *lover of me / he went down / to garden of him / to beds of / the spice / to browse / in the gardens / and to gather / lilies*

My lover has gone down to his garden, to the beds of spices, to browse in the gardens, and to gather lilies.

6:3 *I / to lover of me / and lover of me / to me / the one browsing / among the lilies*

I am my lover's and my lover is mine; he browses among the lilies.

6:4 *beautiful / you / darling of me / as Tirzah / lovely / as Jerusalem / majestic / as the ones having banners*

You are as beautiful, my darling, as Tirzah, lovely as Jerusalem, majestic or awe-inspiring as those who have banners.

6:5 *turn! / eyes of you / from before me / for they / they overwhelm me / hair of you / like flock of / the goats / that they descend / from the Gilead*

Turn your eyes from me; they overwhelm me. Your hair is like a flock of goats descending from Gilead.

6:6 *teeth of you / like flock of / the sheep / that they come up / from the washing / that each of them /ones having twins / and alone / there is not / of them*

Your teeth are like a flock of sheep coming up from the washing. Each of them has its twin, and not one of them is alone.

ז כְּפֶלַח הָרְמוֹן רִקְתָּךְ, מִבְּעַד לְצַמְתְּךָ.

ח שְׁשִׁים הֵמָּה מְלָכוֹת, וּשְׁמֹנִים פִּילְגָשִׁים; וְעַלְמוֹת, אִין מִסְפָּר.

ט אַחַת הִיא, יוֹנְתִי תַמְתִּי--אַחַת הִיא לְאִמָּהּ, בְּרָהּ הִיא לְיוֹלְדָתָהּ;
רְאוּהָ בָנוֹת וְנִאֲשָׁרוּהָ, מְלָכוֹת וּפִילְגָשִׁים וְיַהֲלִוּהָ. { ס }

י זֹמַת הַנִּשְׁקָפָה, כְּמוֹ-שָׁחַר: יָפָה כְּלַבָּנָה, בְּרָהּ כַחֲמָה--אַיְמָה,
כְּנֻדָּגְלוֹת. { ס }

יא אֶל-גִּיט אֶגּוֹז יִרְדְּתִי, לְרֵאוֹת בְּאֵבֵי הַנָּחַל; לְרֵאוֹת הַפְּרָחַה הַגָּפְרִי,
הַנִּצּוֹ הָרְמוֹנִים.

יב לֹא יִדְעָתִי--נִפְשִׁי שָׁמַתְנִי, מִרְכָּבוֹת עַמֵּי נָדִיב.

6:7 *like half of / the pomegranate / temple of you / at behind / to veil of you*

Your temple behind your veil is like the halves of a pomegranate.

6:8 *sixty / they / queens / and eighty / concubines / and virgins / there is no / number*

There are sixty queens and eighty concubines and virgins beyond number.

6:9 *unique / she / dove of me / perfect one of me / only / she / to mother of her / favourite / she / of one bearing her / they saw her / maidens / and they called blessed her / queens / and concubines / also they praised her*

My dove, my perfect one, is unique, the only daughter of her mother, the favourite of the one who bore her. The maidens saw her and called her blessed. The queens and concubines also praised her.

6:10 *who this? / the one appearing / like dawn / fair / as the moon / bright / as the sun / majestic / as the ones preceding*

Who is this that appears like dawn, fair as the moon, bright as the sun, majestic as the stars?

6:11 *to grove of / nut tree / I went down / to look / at new growths of / the valley / to see / if she budded / the vine / they bloomed / the pomegranates*

I went down to the grove of nut trees to look at the new growth in the valley, to see if the vine had budded or the pomegranates bloomed.

6:12 *not / I realised / desire of me / she set me / chariots of / people of me royal*

Before I realised it, my desire set me among my people's royal chariots.

א שׁוּבֵי שׁוּבֵי הַשׁוּלְמִית, שׁוּבֵי שׁוּבֵי וְנִחְזֶה-בָּךְ ; מֵה-תִּחְזוּ, בְּשׁוּלְמִית,
כְּמַחְלֵת, הַמַּחְנִים.

ב מֵה-יָפוּ פְעֻמֶיךָ בְּנֶעְלָים, בֵּת-נָדִיב; חֲמוּקֵי יָרְכִיךָ--כְּמוֹ חֲלָאִים,
מַעֲשֵׂה יָדֵי אָמֹן.

ג שְׁרָרְךָ אֲגֹן הַסֶּהַר, אֶל-יַחְסֹר הַמְּזֹג; בְּטִינְךָ עֲרֹמַת חֲטִים, סוּגָה
בְּשׁוֹשָׁנִים.

ד שְׁנֵי שְׁדֵיךָ כְּשְׁנֵי עֶפְרַיִם, תִּתְאַמֵּי צְבִיָּה.

ה צִנְאָרְךָ, כְּמִגְדַל הַשֵּׁן; עֵינֶיךָ בְּרִכּוֹת בְּחֶשְׁבוֹן, עַל-שַׁעַר בֵּת-רַבִּים—
אֲפָךָ כְּמִגְדַל הַלְּבָנוֹן, צוֹפָה פְּנֵי דַמְשֶׁק.

ו רֹאשְׁךָ עָלֶיךָ כְּכַרְמֶל, וְדַל רֹאשְׁךָ כְּאַחַזְמֹן: מְלָךְ, אֲסוּר בְּרֹהֲטִים.

7:1 *come back! / come back! / the Shulamite / come back! / come back!
/ that we may gaze on you / why would you gaze / on the Shulamite
/ as dance of / the Mahanaim*

Come back, come back, O Shulamite. Come back, come back, that we may gaze on you. Why would you gaze on the Shulamite as on the dance of Mahanaim?

7:2 *how they are beautiful! / feet of you / in the sandals / daughter of /
prince / graceful ones of / legs of you / jewels / work of / hands of /
craftsman*

How beautiful your sandaled feet, O prince's daughter! Your graceful legs are like jewels, the work of a craftsman's hands.

7:3 *navel of you / goblet of / the roundness / never he lacks / the
blended wine / waist of you / mound of / wheat / being encircled /
by the lilies*

Your navel is a rounded goblet that never lacks blended wine. Your waist is a mound of wheat encircled by lilies.

7:4 *two of / breasts of you / like two of / fawns / twins of / gazelle*

Your two breasts are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle.

7:5 *neck of you / like tower of / the ivory / eyes of you / pools / of
Heshbon / by gate of / Bathrabbim / nose of you / like tower of / the
Lebanon / looking / faces of / Damascus*

Your neck is like an ivory tower, your eyes are the pools of Heshbon by the gate of Bathrabbim. Your nose is like the tower of Lebanon looking towards Damascus.

7:6 *head of you / upon you / like the Carmel / and hair of / head of you
/ like the tapestry / king / being held captive / by the tresses*

ז מַה-יָפִית, וּמַה-נְעִמָּה--אַהֲבָה, בַּתְּעֲנוּגִים.

ח זֹאת קוֹמְתָךְ דְּמִתָּה לְתִמְרָה, וְשִׁדְיָךְ לְאַשְׁכְּלוֹת.

ט אֲמַרְתִּי אֶעֱלֶה בְּתִמְרָה, אֲחִזָּה בְּסִנְסֵנִי; וַיְהִי-נָא שִׁדְיָךְ כְּאַשְׁכְּלוֹת
הַגָּפְנוֹ, וְרִיחַ אִפְךָ כְּתַפּוּחִים.

י וַחֲכָךְ, כְּיֵינִי הַטּוֹב הוֹלֵךְ לְדוֹדֵי לְמִישְׁרִים; דוֹבֵב, שִׁפְתֵי יִשְׁנִים.

יא אֲנִי לְדוֹדֵי, וְעָלִי תִשׁוּקְתוֹ. {ס}

יב לָכֵה דוֹדֵי נִצָּא הַשָּׂדֶה, נָלִינָה בְּכַפְרִים.

Your head crowns you like Mount Carmel, and the hair of your head is like tapestry, a king held captive in its tresses.

7:7 *how you are beautiful! / and how you are pleasing! / love / with the delights*

How beautiful you are, and how pleasing you are, love, with your delights!

7:8 *this / stature of you / she is like / to palm / and breasts of you / to clusters of fruit*

Your stature or height is like a palm, and your breasts like clusters of fruit.

7:9 *I said / I will climb / on palm tree / I will take hold / of fruits of him / and may they be now! / breasts of you / like clusters of / the vine / and fragrance of / breath of you / like the apples*

I said, 'I will climb the palm tree; I will take hold of its fruits.' And may your breasts be like the clusters of the vine, the fragrance of your breath like apples

7:10 *and mouth of you / like wine of / the best / going / to lover of me / as straight ones / flowing gently / lips of / sleepers*

And your mouth like the best wine. Going to my lover smoothly, flowing gently over sleepers' lips.

7:11 *I / to lover of me / and for me / desire of him*

I am my lover's; his desire is for me.

7:12 *come! / lover of me / let us go / the countryside / let us spend night / in the villages*

יג נִשְׁכִּימָה, לְכַרְמִים--נִרְאָה אִם-פָּרְחָה הַגֶּפֶן פֶּתַח הַסָּמֶדֶר, הַנִּצּוֹ
הַרְמוֹנִים; שָׁם אֶתֶּן אֶת-דִּדִּי, לְךָ.

יד הַדּוֹדָאִים נָתַנוּ-רִיחַ, וְעַל-פְּתַחֵינוּ כָּל-מִגְדִּים--חֲדָשִׁים, גַּם-יִשְׁנִים;
דּוֹדִי, צָפַנְתִּי לְךָ.

Come, my lover, let us go into the countryside. Let us spend the night in the villages.

7:13 *let us go early / to the vineyards / let us see / if she budded / the vine / he opened / the blossom / they bloomed / the pomegranates / there / I will give / [the one] loves of me / to you*

Let us go early to the vineyards, let us see if the vine has budded and opened its blossom, and the pomegranates have bloomed. There I will give you my love.

7:14 *the mandrakes / they send out fragrance / and at doors of us / all of delicacies / new ones / and old ones / lover of me / I stored up / for you*

The mandrakes send out their fragrance, and at our door is every delicacy, both new and old, that I have stored up for you, my lover.

א מי יתִּנֶּנְךָ כְּאָח לִי, יוֹנֵק שְׂדֵי אִמִּי; אִמְצָאֲךָ בַּחוּץ אֶשְׁקֶךָ, גַּם לֹא-יִבְזוּ לִי.

ב אֶנְהַגֶּנְךָ, אָבִיאֲךָ אֶל-בֵּית אִמִּי—תִּלְמַדְנִי; אֶשְׁקֶנְךָ מִיַּיִן הַרְקָח, מִעֵסִיס רִמּוֹנִי.

ג שְׂמֵאלוֹ תַּחַת רֵאשִׁי, וְיָמִינוֹ תַּחְבֵּקְנִי.

ד הַשְּׁבַעְתִּי אֶתְנַסִּים, יָב רֹשְׁלָם: מֵה-תִּעִירוּ וּמֵה-תִּעְרְרוּ אֶת-הָאֲהָבָה, עַד שֶׁתַּחְפֹּץ. {ס}

ה מי זֹאת, עֹלָה מִן-הַמִּדְבָּר, מִתְרַכֶּקֶת, עַל-דֹּדָה; תַּחַת הַתְּפוּחַ, עוֹרְרֵתֶנְךָ--שָׂמָה חִבְּלֶתְךָ אִמְךָ, שָׂמָה חִבְּלָה יִלְדֶתְךָ.

ו שִׁימְנֵי כַּחוֹתֶם עַל-לִבֶּךָ, כַּחוֹתֶם עַל-זְרוּעֶנְךָ--כִּי-עֲזָה כְּמוֹת אֲהָבָה,

8:1 *who? / he could make you / like brother / of me / one nursing / breasts of / mother of me / should I find you / at the outside / I would kiss you / then / not they would despise / to me*

If only you were to me like a brother, who was nursed at the breasts of my mother, then should I find you outside, I would kiss you, and no-one would despise me.

8:2 *I would lead you / I would bring you / to house of / mother of me / she taught me / I would give to drink you / from wine / the spice / from nectar of / pomegranate of me*

I would lead you, I would bring you to my mother's house, she who taught me. I would give you spiced wine to drink, the nectar of my pomegranate.

8:3 *left arm of him / under / head of me / and right arm of him / she embraces me*

His left arm under my head, and his right arm embracing me.

8:4 *I charge / you / daughters of / Jerusalem / not you arouse / and not you awaken / [the one] the love / until that she desires*

I charge you, daughters of Jerusalem, not to arouse and not to awaken love until it so desires.

8:5 *who / this? / coming up / from the desert / leaning / on lover of her / under / the apple tree / I roused you / at there / she conceived you / mother of you / at there / she was in labour / she bore you*

Who is this rising from the desert, leaning on her lover? Under the apple or apricot tree, I roused you. There your mother conceived you. There she conceived and bore you.

8:6 *place me! / like the seal / over heart of you / like the seal / on arms of you / for strong / as the death / love / unyielding / as Sheol / jealousy / blazes of her / blazes of / fire / flame of Yahweh*

קָשָׁה כְּשֵׂאוֹל קִנְיָהּ : רִשְׁפִּיהָ--רִשְׁפִּי, אֵשׁ שְׁלֵהֲבַתֶּיהָ.

ז מִיָּם רַבִּים, לֹא יוּכְלוּ לְכַבּוֹת אֶת-הָאֵהָבָה, וּנְהָרוֹת, לֹא יִשְׁטַפּוּהָ ;
אִם-יִתֵּן אִישׁ אֶת-כָּל-הוֹן בֵּיתוֹ, בְּאַהֲבָה--בוֹז, יְבוֹזוּ לוֹ. { ס }

ח אַחֹת לָנוּ קִטְנָה, וְשָׁדִים אִין לָהּ ; מֵה-נַעֲשֶׂה לְאַחֲתָנוּ, בַּ שְׂיִדְמוֹ-
בָּהּ.

ט אִם-חוֹמָה הִיא, נִבְנֶה עָלֶיהָ טִירַת כָּסֶף ; וְאִם-דֶּלֶת הִיא, נִצּוֹר עָלֶיהָ
לוֹחַ אָרֶז.

י אֲנִי חוֹמָה, וְשָׁדַי כַּמִּגְדָּלוֹת ; אֲזוּ הִיִּיתִי בְּעֵינָיו, כְּמוֹצֵאת שְׁלוֹם. { פ }

יא כָּרֶם הָיָה לְשִׁלְמֹה בְּבַעַל הָמוֹן, נָתַן אֶת-הַכָּרֶם לְנֹטְרִים : אִישׁ יָבֵא
בְּפָרְיוֹ, אֶלְפֵי כָּסֶף.

Place me like a seal over your heart, like a seal on your arms. For love is as strong *or* fierce as death, as hard *or* cruel as Sheol. [Its] jealousy blazes like blazing fire, like a mighty flame.

8:7 *waters / many ones / not / they can / to quench / [the one] the love / and rivers / not / they can wash her away / if he gave / one / [the one] all of wealth of / house of him / for the love / to scorn / they would scorn / at him*

Many waters cannot quench love, and rivers cannot wash it away. If a man gave all of the wealth in his house for love, they would utterly scorn *or* despise him.

8:8 *sister / to us / young / and breasts / not / to her / what shall we do? / for sister of us / for the day / that he is spoken for her*

Our sister is young, and she has no breasts. What shall we do for our sister on the day when she is wooed *or* spoken for?

8:9 *if wall / she / we will build / on her / tower of / silver / and if door / she / we will enclose / to her / panel of / cedar*

If she is a wall, we will build a silver tower upon her; and if she is a door, we will enclose her with panels of cedar.

8:10 *I / wall / and breasts of me / like the towers / thus / I became / in eyes of him / like one bringing / contentment*

I am a wall, and my breasts are like towers. So then I became in his eyes like one who brings contentment.

8:11 *vineyard / he was / to Solomon / in Baal / Hamon / he let out / [the one] the vineyard / to the ones being tenants / each / he would bring / for fruit of him / thousand of / silver*

Solomon had a vineyard in Baal Hamon. He let out his vineyard to his tenants *or* keepers. Each would obtain *or* procure *or* bring for its fruit a thousand pieces of silver.

8:12 *vineyard-of-me / that to me / before me / the thousand / for you / Solomon / and two hundreds / for ones tending / [the one] fruit of him*

My own vineyard is before me. The thousand [pieces of silver] are yours, Solomon, and two hundred are for the ones who tend its fruit.

8:13 *the open dwelling / in the gardens / friends / ones attending / to voice of you / let hear me!*

You who dwell in the gardens with your friends in attendance, let me hear your voice!

8:14 *come away! / lover of me / and be like to you / to gazelle / or / to young deer of / the stags / on / mountains of / spices*

Run away, my lover, and be like a gazelle or like a young deer of the stags on the mountains of spices.

יב כִּרְמִי שְׁלִי, לְפָנַי ; הָאֶלֶף לְךָ שְׁלֵמָה, וּמֵאֲתָיִם לְנֹטְרִים אֶת-פְּרִיו.

יג הַיּוֹשֶׁבֶת בְּגַנִּים, חֲבֵרִים מְקַשְׁיָבִים לְקוֹלְךָ--הַשְּׁמִיעֵנִי.

יד בָּרַח דּוֹדִי, וּדְמָה-לְךָ לְצִבִּי אוֹ לְעֶפְרַיִם--עַל, הָרִי בְּשָׂמִים.

{ש}

I

1 THE SONG OF SONGS that is Solomon's **NOTE**

2 O kiss me,
kiss me with your mouth!
For your loving
is headier than wine. **NOTE**

3 Your name smells sweet,
the scent of myrrh and aloes,
and every young girl desires you. **NOTE**

4 Take me by the hand,
and let us run together!

*My lover and my king
has led me to his room.
Let us exult now and rejoice,
and proclaim our loving **NOTE**
more beautiful than wine.*

Every one of them desires you.

5 Yes, you women of Jerusalem,
I am dark-skinned,
and I am beautiful! **NOTE**
As dark-skinned as the tents of Kedar,
as beautiful as Solomon's rich tapestries.

6 Do not stare at me
because I am dark-skinned.
It was the sun that made me dark.

*My brothers were angry with me,
and made me guard the vineyards.
But my own I did not guard. **NOTE***

7 You whom my soul loves,
tell me, where do you feed your sheep?
Where do you let them rest
in the heat of noon?
Why should I blindly search for them
among the flocks of your companions? **NOTE**

8 Lovely woman, if you do not know,
follow the tracks the sheep have made,
and let your young goats
graze by the shepherds' tents.

9 You are like a mare, my darling,
among the stallions of Pharaoh's chariots. **NOTE**

10 Your cheeks are so beautiful,
and those loops of hair,
that string of shells around your neck. **NOTE**

11 I will make for you earrings of gold
with silver filigree.

12 My king lay down with me,
and my perfume spread its fragrance. **NOTE**

13 My lover is to me a sachet of myrrh
that rests between my breasts,

14 a clutch of henna blossoms
from the vineyards of Ein Gedi.

15 How beautiful you are, my darling,
how beautiful,
your eyes like doves.

16 *How handsome you are, my lover,
how charming.
Wherever we lie, our bed is lush and green.*

17 *Our roofbeams are of cedar,
our eaves of juniper.*

II

1 *I am the rose of Sharon,
the lily of the valleys. NOTE*

2 Like a lily among thistles,
so is my sweetheart among young women.

3 *Like a tree of apricots among thickets, NOTE
so is my beloved among young men.
I delight as I sit beneath his shade,
and his fruit is sweet to taste.*

4 *He has brought me to the hall of wine,
and raised his banner over me,
which is love. NOTE*

5 *Let me lie among vine blossoms
in a bed of apricots. NOTE
I am in a fever of love.*

6 *O for his left hand under my head,
and his right arm holding me close.*

7 *Women of Jerusalem, swear to me,
by the gazelles and the deer of the field,
that you will never wake or rouse us
till our love has been fulfilled. NOTE*

8 *The voice of my sweetheart...listen!
It is leaping across the mountains,
bounding over the hills.*

9 *My sweetheart is like a gazelle, or a young stag.
Look, there he stands behind our wall,
looking through the crevices,*

peering through the gaps.

10 *He calls and says to me*

Come, my darling, my love,
come with me.

11 For see, the winter is past,
the rains are over and gone.

12 Flowers appear on the earth.
Now is the time of the nightingale's song,
and the cooing of doves is heard in our land.

13 The fig trees sweeten their early fruit,
and the blossoming vines
spread their fragrance.
Come, my darling, my love,
come with me.

14 My dove in the clefts of the rocks,
in the hidden places of the mountainside,
show me your face,
let me hear your voice,
for your voice is sweet,
and you are lovely to look at.

15 CATCH US THE FOXES, THE LITTLE FOXES THAT RAID OUR
VINEYARDS NOW, WHEN THE VINES HAVE BEGUN TO
BLOSSOM. **NOTE**

16 *My lover is mine, and I am his,
he who feasts among the lilies with his flock. NOTE*

17 *Before the day breaks,
and the shadows of the night are gone, NOTE
hurry away, my love.*

*Be like a gazelle or a young stag
over the jagged hills.*

III

1 *Night after night in my bed, **NOTE**
I yearned for the one I loved.
I looked for him,
but did not find him.*

2 *I will get up and go about the city,
through the streets and through the squares,
and I will search for the one my heart loves.
I searched for him,
but did not find him.*

3 *The watchmen came upon me
as they went about the city.
'Have you seen him?
Have you seen the one I love?' **NOTE***

4 *Scarcely had I passed them
than I found my only love.
I held him close and would not let him go
till I had brought him to my mother's house,
into my mother's room.*

5 *Women of Jerusalem, swear to me,
by the gazelles and the deer of the field,
that you will never wake or rouse us
till our love has been fulfilled. **NOTE***

6 WHO IS THIS RISING FROM THE DESERT
IN COLUMNS OF SMOKE,
MORE FRAGRANT WITH MYRRH AND FRANKINCENSE
THAN ALL THE SPICES OF THE MERCHANTS?

7 LOOK, HERE IS SOLOMON'S CARRIAGE,
WITH SIXTY WARRIORS SURROUNDING IT,
THE BRAVEST IN ALL ISRAEL.

8 SKILLED IN BATTLE, EACH HAS A SWORD,
A SWORD AT THEIR SIDES
AGAINST THE DANGERS OF THE NIGHT.

9 KING SOLOMON BUILT A PALACE **NOTE**
OUT OF WOOD FROM LEBANON.

10 ITS PILLARS HE ADORNED WITH SILVER,
THE BASE OF THEM WITH GOLD,
ITS CUSHIONING WITH PURPLE.
AND THE WOMEN OF THE CITY PAVED
ITS INTERIOR WITH LOVE.

11 WOMEN OF JERUSALEM, COME OUT AND GAZE
AT SOLOMON THE KING! SEE THE CROWN
HIS MOTHER SET UPON HIS HEAD
ON HIS WEDDING DAY,
THE DAY HIS HEART REJOICED.

IV

- 1 How beautiful you are, my love,
how beautiful.
The eyes behind your veil **NOTE**
are doves.
Your hair is like a flock of goats
spilling down Mount Gilead.
- 2 Your teeth are like a flock of new-shorn sheep
that come up fresh from being washed.
Each matches, and not one of them
does not have a twin. **NOTE**
- 3 Your lips are like a crimson ribbon,
and how lovely is your voice.
Like a slice of pomegranate,
your brow behind your veil. **NOTE**
- 4 Your neck is like the tower of David,
raised in splendour. **NOTE**
A thousand bucklers hang upon it,
all the warriors' shields.
- 5 Your breasts are like two fawns,
twins of a gazelle
that graze among the lilies.
- 6 Before the day breaks,
and the shadows of the night are gone,
I will go to the mountain of myrrh
and to the hill of frankincense.
- 7 My darling, you are wholly beautiful,
without a flaw.
- 8 O come with me, my bride,
come down with me from Lebanon.
Come down from Mount Amana's peak,
from Senir's summit

- and from Hermon's heights,
from lions' dens
and the mountain haunt of leopards. **NOTE**
- 9 You have ravished my heart,
my sister and bride. **NOTE**
You have ravished my heart
with one glance of your eyes,
with one jewel round your neck.
- 10 How sweet is your loving,
my sister and bride.
Your loving is sweeter than wine,
your perfume more fragrant than any spice.
- 11 My bride, your lips well up with honey,
and honey and milk are under your tongue.
The fragrance of Lebanon
breathes through your clothes.
- 12 A garden enclosed is my sister and bride,
a well that is hidden,
a spring that is sealed.
- 13 Your branches **NOTE** make an orchard
of pomegranate trees,
of choice fruits,
henna and spikenard too,
- 14 spikenard and saffron,
cane and cinnamon,
with every sort of incense tree,
myrrh and aloes,
spices of the finest kind.
- 15 You are a fountain in the garden,
a well of flowing water
streaming down from Lebanon.
- 16 *North wind, awake! And come, south wind.
Blow upon my garden*

*that its fragrance may be spread abroad.
Let my lover come now to his garden
and taste its lovely fruit.*

V

1 I have come into my garden,
my sister and bride.
I have gathered my myrrh and my spices too.
I have eaten the honeycomb, the honey as well.
I have drunk my milk and my wine.
So eat, my friends, and drink
till you are drunk with love. **NOTE**

2 *I was asleep but my heart was awake.
The sound of my lover knocking...*

‘Open up, my sister, my darling,
my dove, my perfection.
My hair is wet,
drenched with the dew of the night.’

3 *‘But I have taken off my clothes –
must I dress again?
And I have washed my feet –
must I dirty them again?’*

4 *Yet my lover reached in for the latch,
and my heart began to pound. **NOTE***

5 *I rose to open for my love,
my fingers wet with myrrh
that dripped down on the lock.*

6 *I opened for my love,
but he had slipped away and gone.
When he had spoken,
how much my soul went out to him.*

*I searched for him
but did not find him.
I called his name
and yet he did not answer.*

7 *The watchmen found me
as they went about the city.
They beat and bruised me.
They tore away my cloak,
those watchmen of the walls.*

8 *Swear to me, women of Jerusalem,
that if you find my lover,
you will tell him,
I am feverish with love.*

9 *YET HOW IS YOUR LOVER, MOST BEAUTIFUL OF WOMEN,
DIFFERENT FROM ALL OTHER LOVERS?
HOW IS HE SO DIFFERENT
THAT YOU ENTREAT US IN THIS WAY?*

10 *My lover is as white as milk, as red as wine, **NOTE**
and finer than ten thousand other men.*

11 *His head is purest gold,
the waves of his hair as black as ravens.*

12 *His eyes are like doves by streams of water,
bathed in milk, mounted like jewels.*

13 *His cheeks are like a bed of spices –
no, towers of perfume.
His lips are like lilies,
wet with myrrh.*

14 *His arms are like rods of gold
studded with jewels.
His belly is as smooth as ivory,
inlaid with sapphires.*

15 *His legs are marble pillars
set on pedestals of gold.
The sight of him is like the Lebanon,
a man as splendid as its cedar trees.*

16 *Such sweetness in his mouth,
and all of him is my delight.
Women of Jerusalem,
this is my lover, this is my friend.*

VI

1 MOST BEAUTIFUL OF WOMEN,
WHERE HAS YOUR LOVER GONE?
SAY WHERE HE WENT,
THAT WE MAY LOOK FOR HIM WITH YOU.

2 *My love has gone down to his garden,
to his beds of spices,
to eat there,
and to gather lilies.*

3 *My loved one is mine, and I am his.
He feasts in a field of lilies.*

4 You are as beautiful, my darling, as Tirzah,
as lovely as Jerusalem,
as wondrous as the constellations of the stars. **NOTE**

5 Turn away your eyes. They dazzle me.
Your hair is like a flock of goats
that bound down from Mount Gilead.

6 Your teeth, a flock of new-shorn sheep
fresh from being washed.
Each matches, and not one of them
does not have a twin.

7 Your brow behind your veil,
like a slice of pomegranate.

8 Sixty queens, eighty concubines,
and numberless young women...

9 but only one of them unique,
my dove, my perfect one,

her mother's only child,
without blemish to the one who bore her.
Young women see her and call her blessed.
Queens and concubines sing her praise.

10 Who is this who appears like the dawn,
as white as the moon,
as blazing as the sun,
as wondrous as the stars?

11 I went down to the walnut grove
to look for new growth in the valley,
to see if the vines were blossoming
and the pomegranates bloomed.

12 Before I realised it,
I had been set upon the chariot
of the greatest of my people. **NOTE**

VII

- 1 DANCE FOR US, WOMAN OF JERUSALEM.
DANCE, AND DANCE AGAIN,
SO THAT WE MAY WATCH YOU DANCING.
- WHY DO YOU GAZE AT THE WOMAN OF JERUSALEM
AS SHE WHIRLS BETWEEN
THE TWO ROWS OF OUR DANCERS? **NOTE**
- 2 How wonderful your sandaled steps,
you prince's daughter.
The curves of your thighs are like two jewels,
the work of a craftsman's hands.
- 3 Your navel is a rounded drinking cup –
may it overflow with wine!
Your belly is a mound of wheat
circled round with lilies.
- 4 Your breasts – two fawns,
the twins of a gazelle.
- 5 Your neck, a tower of ivory.
Your eyes, like the pools in Heshbon,
by the gates of that majestic place.
Your face – a tower of Lebanon
that looks towards Damascus. **NOTE**
- 6 Your head crowns you like Mount Carmel,
and your hair is like royal purple.
The way the locks stream down
would captivate a king. **NOTE**
- 7 O love, how splendid and how sweet you are,
beyond all other joy.
- 8 That day you seemed to me a tall palm tree,

- your breasts the clusters of its fruit.
- 9 I thought to myself, 'I will climb that tree,
and touch its fruit.' So now, may your breasts
be like clusters of grapes upon the vine,
the fragrance of your breath like apricots,
- 10 and your mouth like the finest wine...
- which smoothly flows into my lover
and past his sleeping lips. **NOTE***
- 11 *I am my lover's. He yearns for me alone.*
- 12 *Come, my love,
let us go out into the fields,
and spend the night
where the henna bushes bloom.*
- 13 *Let us go early to the vineyards,
to see if the vines have budded
and opened their blossom,
and if the pomegranates have bloomed.
There I will give you my love.*
- 14 *The mandrakes give off their scent;
and at our door,
rare fruit of every kind, my love,
I have stored away for you.*

VIII

- 1 *If only you were my brother,
nursed at my mother's breasts,
I could meet you in the streets and kiss you,
and no one would pour scorn.*
- 2 *I could bring you to my mother's house,
and she would teach me. **NOTE**
I would give you spiced wine to drink,
my pomegranate wine.*
- 3 *O for his left hand under my head,
and his right hand holding me close.*
- 4 *Women of Jerusalem, swear to me
that you will never wake or rouse us
till our love has been fulfilled.*
- 5 WHO IS THIS RISING FROM THE DESERT,
LEANING ON HER LOVER'S ARM?
- Under the apricot tree, I roused you.
There, where your mother conceived you,
and where you were born.*
- 6 *Stamp me like a seal upon your heart,
like a ring around your arm.
For love is as fierce as death,
its jealousy as bitter as the grave.
Its smallest sparks blaze forth like flame,
like a devouring fire.*
- 7 *Great seas can not extinguish love.
There are no rivers that can make it drown.
If anyone shall try to purchase love*

*with all the wealth that they possess,
they will be utterly despised.*

- 8 WE HAVE A YOUNG SISTER
WHO YET HAS NO BREASTS.
WHAT CAN WE DO FOR OUR SISTER
WHEN SUITORS APPROACH?
- 9 IF SHE IS A WALL,
WE WILL BUILD UPON HER A TOWER OF SILVER.
IF SHE IS A DOOR,
WE WILL ENCLOSE HER WITH PANELS OF CEDAR. **NOTE**
- 10 *I am a wall, and my breasts are like towers.
But to my lover,
I am one who brings peace.*
- 11 King Solomon had a vineyard in Baal Hamon. **NOTE**
He let it out to tenants,
who each would sell its fruit
for a thousand silver pieces.
- 12 I too have a vineyard, here at hand.
So Solomon, the thousand silver pieces –
they are yours, and two hundred
for the ones who tend your fruit.
- 13 Woman in the garden,
your friends listen for your voice.
Let me hear it now.
- 14 *Hurry, run away, my love,
and be like a gazelle,
or like a young stag,
upon the hills where spices grow.*

NOTES

In the compiling of these notes, I am greatly indebted to the work of Chana and Ariel Bloch, Marcia Falk, and Marvin H. Pope [see Further Reading section], all of whom have provided invaluable information about, and insight into, the original Hebrew text.

THE SONG OF SONGS that is Solomon's

This phrase is clearly intended to be the title of the work that follows, rather than the first line of the text, and signals the superlative nature of the Song. The Hebrew *'ašer li-šəlomoh* (here translated as 'that is Solomon's') is ambiguous, with a range of possible meanings from 'by/to/of/about Solomon', to 'belonging to/associated with/dedicated to Solomon'. Few if any interpreters now believe that Solomon was the actual author of the songs. [RETURN](#)

O kiss me, kiss me with your mouth! For your loving is headier than wine.

Literally translated, the Hebrew presents a confusing jump from third to second person (i.e. 'O that *he* would kiss me, kiss me with *his* mouth! For *your* loving is more delightful than wine.'). Such shifts between third and second person are in fact characteristic of biblical style. But simply to reproduce them in English evokes a confusing change of character and referent, when both phrases are better understood as referring to the same person. Hence, the rendering above as a consistent second-person address.

The Hebrew *dodim*, rendered in most translations as a generalised 'love', is perhaps better translated as 'love-making' or 'loving', anchoring the term more specifically in a sensuous and individual reality. [RETURN](#)

Your name smells sweet, the scent of myrrh and aloes

Literally, the Hebrew *šəmen turaq šəmekha*, which is an enigmatic phrase, could read 'your name is poured-out oil', oil here being

NOTES

associated with perfume, and with the young man's sensuality. The translation offered here, 'your name smells sweet, the scent of myrrh and aloes', seeks to convey the sensual power evoked by the mere speaking of the young man's name. [RETURN](#)

And proclaim our loving

The Hebrew again presents an unexpected use of person, literally reading 'proclaim the way *you* love'. For the sake of naturalness, I have changed the somewhat distancing second-person singular to the shared intimacy of a first-person plural. [RETURN](#)

I am dark-skinned, and I am beautiful!

The conjunction *ve-* in the Hebrew presents a genuine ambiguity, since it can mean either 'and' or 'but'. Many translations opt for the adversative 'I am dark-skinned, *but* I am beautiful', thereby making the statement sound defensive, self-deprecating, and apologetic. But the conjunction means 'and' far more commonly, and in this light, the statement becomes one of affirmation, self-confidence, and pride. It is this latter reading that is adopted here. [RETURN](#)

But my own I did not guard

Although the vineyards mentioned in the previous sentence may be real and physical, the emphatic pointing in the phrase *karmi šelli* (my vineyard, mine) suggests a more intimate and metaphoric meaning: either she has neglected her beauty by working outdoors in the sun, or her virginity has been lost. [RETURN](#)

Why should I blindly search for them

The meaning of the Hebrew *'oteyah*, rendered here as 'blindly search', is uncertain. A number of translations read 'go astray', 'lose my way', or 'wander', echoing the frequent biblical association between shepherding and getting lost. Others read 'wrap/veil/cover myself', suggesting either a physical or a figurative blindness, an inability to see the way clearly. I follow Falk here [see Further Reading] in combining the two notions of wandering and blindness. [RETURN](#)

You are like a mare, my darling, among the stallions of Pharaoh's chariots

A literal translation of the Hebrew ('To a mare among the chariots of Pharaoh, I liken you, my love') presents a puzzling and potentially offensive association between the adored woman and a mare. The point of the comparison, though, becomes clearer when the function of mares in ancient warfare is considered. Set loose in battle, especially if in heat,

they could lure and distract the stallions harnessed to Pharaoh's chariots. Hence, the addition of the clarifying phrase 'among the stallions' above. From this point of view, it is not simply the woman's beauty or regality that is suggested, but also her seductiveness and power to tempt. [RETURN](#)

those loops of hair, that string of shells

The Hebrew terms *torim* and *haruzim* are difficult to interpret. *Torim* has been variously translated as 'ornaments/plaited wreaths/plaited hair/braids'. The word *haruzim*, which occurs only once in the Bible (a *hapax legomenon*), is particularly problematic. It is usually taken to refer to a string of beads/pearls/shells, worn around the neck. [RETURN](#)

My king lay down with me

The Hebrew word *bi-msibbo* is ambiguous, and has generated a range of translations, from 'at his table', 'on his couch', to 'sitting', 'leaning back', 'reclining', 'lying down'. The intimacy of 'lay down with me' has been preferred to the domesticity of 'sat down at his table'. [RETURN](#)

I am the rose of Sharon, the lily of the valleys

The botanical identification of the two flowers mentioned as *havaššelet* and *šošanah* has occasioned much debate. They have been variously translated as rose, tulip, lily, crocus, hyacinth, narcissus, lotus, wildflower. In the absence of any definitive identification, it has seemed legitimate to retain 'rose' and 'lily' because of their powerful resonance in biblical tradition. [RETURN](#)

Like a tree of apricots among thickets

The Hebrew *tappuah* is commonly mis-translated as 'apple', even though apples did not grow in biblical Palestine. Recent botanical commentary suggests the *tappuah* may have been a quince or, more likely, an apricot. [RETURN](#)

and raised his banner over me, which is love

The Hebrew term *diglo* has generated substantial debate: between those who interpret the word as meaning 'flag, banner', and those who read it as denoting 'glance, gaze, look', and by extension 'intent', 'intention' (i.e. 'he gazed at me with love', or 'his intention towards me was love'). I have opted for the former meaning, seeing in the words a sense both of triumph and exultation ('raised his banner...'), and of intimate protectiveness ('...over me, which is love'). [RETURN](#)

Let me lie among vine blossoms in a bed of apricots

It seems likely that the Hebrew evokes a primary meaning of physical action, i.e. 'prop me up', 'make my bed', 'cover me', rather than the traditional, more inward meaning of 'sustain/refresh/comfort/strengthen [me]'. [RETURN](#)

you will never wake or rouse us till our love has been fulfilled

Literally, the adjuration to the city women reads 'that you do not or never awaken and never arouse love until it desires'. Yet, after her passionate expression of longing to be with her lover, this seems a curious interruption, warning the city women not to arouse passion prematurely. I follow Falk in preferring the reading, 'Swear...that you will never wake or rouse us till our love has been fulfilled.' [RETURN](#)

CATCH US THE FOXES, THE LITTLE FOXES THAT RAID OUR VINEYARDS

NOW, WHEN THE VINES HAVE BEGUN TO BLOSSOM

Vineyards are a frequent symbol in the Song of female sexuality, here perceived in a time of first blossoming, and thus of particular vulnerability. The foxes can be seen as male, hostile marauders who threaten female beauty and virginity. Much more enigmatic, though, are the identities of the speaker(s) and the addressee(s), and the relation of this verse to its context. [RETURN](#)

he who feasts among the lilies with his flock

The Hebrew verb *ra'ah* can be applied both to a shepherd tending his flock, and to the sheep actually grazing. I try to capture both senses in 'he who feasts among the lilies with his flock.' [RETURN](#)

Before the day breaks, and the shadows of the night are gone

The phrase *ve-nasu ha-šalalim* (literally, 'the shadows flee') has sometimes been interpreted as meaning 'late afternoon', i.e. before the sun sets and all shadows disappear. It seems more natural, though, to read the phrase in close conjunction with the one preceding, '*ad še-yapuah ha-yom* (literally, 'before the day breathes'), and to interpret 'shadows' as the darkness of the night. [RETURN](#)

Night after night in my bed

The phrase *ba-leylot*, literally 'in the nights', can mean 'at night' or 'night after night'. In view of the passionate yearning depicted here, 'night after night' seems a more effective rendering. [RETURN](#)

'Have you seen him? Have you seen the one I love?'

The Hebrew literally reads 'the one I love have you seen', without any introductory phrase such as 'I asked them'. Together with the unusual word order, with the object placed before the verb, the effect is, as the Blochs [see Further Reading] point out, to heighten the sense of drama and urgency. Hence, the almost breathless repetition of 'have you seen...?', which I adopt from both the Blochs and Wolkstein [see Further Reading]. [RETURN](#)

you will never wake or rouse us till our love has been fulfilled

See the commentary above on this identical phrase. [RETURN](#)

KING SOLOMON BUILT A PALACE

The Hebrew word *'appiryon* is another *hapax legomenon*, occurring nowhere else in the Old Testament. Although some translators have construed it as referring to a portable structure (carriage, sedan chair, litter, palanquin), the mention of its pillars and paved interiors almost certainly indicate a fixed, and much larger structure. Hence, the choice of 'palace' in this translation. [RETURN](#)

The eyes behind your veil

The enigmatic Hebrew word *šammah* has been interpreted in two different ways: as referring to the woman's hair, or to a veil that she wears. I follow the majority of translations in preferring 'veil'. [RETURN](#)

Each matches, and not one of them does not have a twin

The text allows two readings: all of the sheep have a twin, suggesting the collective health and fecundity of the flock, or both the sheep and the teeth are identical in shape, with none of them missing. [RETURN](#)

Like a slice of pomegranate, your brow behind your veil

Here translated as 'brow', the Hebrew *raqqah* could also mean cheek, temple, forehead. The point of the comparison is commonly assumed to be the colour of the pomegranate, yet the smoothness and especially the shape of a slice of the fruit are equally plausible emphases. [RETURN](#)

Your neck is like the tower of David raised in splendour

The enigmatic hapax *talpiyyot*, as the Blochs point out [see Further Reading], has given rise to a number of different interpretations. The two most plausible are 'built in courses/built in terraces' (comparing the rows of beads around the woman's neck with a tower built in staggered rows of stones), and 'built magnificently/built to perfection'. In the context of the woman's neck, I have chosen the latter rather than the

former reading, and have preferred 'raised' to 'built' as an appropriate verb. [RETURN](#)

...from Lebanon...from Mount Amana's peak, from Senir's summit and from Hermon's heights...

Although the mountains and natural environment mentioned here are part of the physical geography of ancient Israel, the verse is almost certainly to be read symbolically rather than literally. The woman and her lover are not literally in the mountains, close to lions and leopards. But they are in positions of danger, inaccessible should help be needed, whilst at the same time being part of a majestic beauty. [RETURN](#)

my sister and bride

As in the note above, the Hebrew *'ahoti kallah* (literally, 'my sister, bride') should be interpreted metaphorically rather than literally. Neither term implies either a sibling relationship or a wedding ceremony. Rather, both are terms of intimacy and endearment. [RETURN](#)

Your branches

There are two major interpretations of the Hebrew word *šelaḥayik*, a hapax of uncertain meaning. One, deriving from *šelaḥim* ('irrigation channels', 'irrigated fields'), variously translates the term as 'watered fields', 'canal', 'groove', 'conduit'. The other, deriving from the root verb *šlh* (meaning 'to send, stretch out, extend'), renders the word as 'spreading branches/boughs/roots'. In the light of the widespread use of tree and plant images in the Song, I have preferred the latter reading. [RETURN](#)

So eat, my friends, and drink till you are drunk with love.

There is some debate about the speaker of this call to enjoy earthly, sensual pleasures. Some see it as addressed to the lovers by one or more speakers outside the love relationship. The sentiments expressed, though, are perfectly consonant with what the young man has just said, and I have therefore translated them as continuing to come from his mouth. [RETURN](#)

my heart began to pound

The Hebrew *me'ay hamu 'alav* literally means 'my bowels stirred/churned/rumbled for him', the bowels being seen by the ancient Hebrews as the seat of the emotions. The closest equivalent in English literary convention is the heart, hence its adoption here. [RETURN](#)

My lover is as white as milk, as red as wine

A relatively free rendering of the Hebrew *ṣah ve-'adom*, which literally means 'white and red'. The Blochs [see Further Reading] translate the phrase as 'my beloved is milk and wine'. I try to draw the two colours and substances together in the similes 'as white as milk, as red as wine.'

RETURN

as wondrous as the constellations of the stars

The enigmatic word *nidgalot*, which occurs twice in this chapter but nowhere else in the Bible, has commonly been translated as 'ranked phalanxes', 'army with banners', 'ranks of flags'. In the context, however, a military simile seems almost entirely mis-placed. Falk [see Further Reading] interprets the word as meaning 'visions', whilst the Blochs [see Further Reading] read it as referring to the awe-inspiring prominence of the stars. Though their version reads rather woodenly ('daunting as the stars in their courses!'), I have chosen their general approach in the light of the enchanted wonder that suffuses this verse.

RETURN

Before I realised it, I had been set upon the chariot of the greatest of my people

Almost universally, this verse is acknowledged to be the most difficult, if not impossible, to translate in the entire Song. It has generated vastly different interpretations, countless proposed emendations, and has at times been omitted as simply untranslatable. There is no doubt that the text is, at best, singularly garbled and, at worst, corrupt beyond intelligible meaning. Both Pope and the Blochs [see Further Reading] offer a detailed account of the individual phrases that make up the verse. The translation offered here, it goes without saying, is tentative in the extreme. RETURN

DANCE FOR US, WOMAN OF JERUSALEM. DANCE, AND DANCE AGAIN, SO THAT WE MAY WATCH YOU DANCING.

WHY DO YOU GAZE AT THE WOMAN OF JERUSALEM AS SHE WHIRLS BETWEEN THE TWO ROWS OF OUR DANCERS?

The difficulties of the preceding verse spill over into this. There is no consensus among translators about who is speaking these words, who the other participants in the dance are, where the dance is taking place, what its exact movements are, or what indeed is the meaning of the verse. I try to draw some sense from the confusion by positing two (groups of?) voices, which respond differently to the woman who is dancing between them. One group urges her on to dance in an ever

greater ecstasy, while the other is more questioning and even aggressive in its tone of voice. RETURN

Your face - a tower of Lebanon that looks towards Damascus

The Hebrew *'appekh*, here translated as 'your face', has often been rendered as 'your nose'. But although the comparison of the woman's nose to a tower may refer to its elegant straightness, the effect of the simile ('a towering nose' or 'a nose like a tower') is close to ludicrous. Hence, the choice here of a *face* that majestically looks forth from its elevated height towards Damascus. RETURN

The way the locks stream down

The Hebrew word *reḥaṭim* is enigmatic but is generally interpreted as a metaphor for 'hair', especially hair that falls or streams down. RETURN

which smoothly flows into my lover and past his sleeping lips

Since the Hebrew word *dodi* means a male lover, it is clearly plausible to interpret these words as a playful interruption by the *woman*, though the Hebrew meaning is far from clear, even so. The first phrase *holekh le-dodi le-meyšarim* literally means 'going to my lover smoothly', the second *dovev šifte yešenim* 'gliding over/stirring the lips of sleepers'. Many emendations to the original have been proposed in an attempt to find a coherent meaning, though none have succeeded. The version above tries to salvage as much natural sense from the words as possible.

RETURN

and she would teach me

The original *telammedeni* can mean either 'she would teach me' or 'you [i.e. the man] would teach me.' I have preferred the consistency of 'my mother/she', rather than the unexplained shift of reference in 'my mother/you'. RETURN

WE HAVE A YOUNG SISTER... IF SHE IS A WALL... IF SHE IS A DOOR...

Another notoriously enigmatic passage, about which there is little consensus. Questions about the identity of the speakers, and of the 'young sister' to whom they refer, have elicited no agreement among commentators. Even more problematic are the metaphoric hypotheses 'if she is a wall', 'if she is a door'. Some critics see the images as relatively synonymous, 'wall' and 'door' being architectural features that the speakers offer to adorn to make the 'young sister' more attractive to potential suitors. But the prevalent view is that 'wall' and 'door' are antithetical images, the impenetrable 'wall' suggesting

chastity, the opening ‘door’ suggesting, at the very least, an accessibility that has to be boarded up by planks of wood. [RETURN](#)

Baal Hamon

Literally, *ba‘al hamon* means ‘owner of great wealth’, which could be an invented place-name alluding to Solomon. But whether such a place or a vineyard actually existed is unknown. [RETURN](#)

FURTHER READING AND LINKS

The critical literature on *The Song of Songs* is vast. The selected bibliography below presents material specifically devoted to issues of translating the Hebrew text into English.

Translations with accompanying Hebrew text

- O.L. Barnes *The Song of Songs: a New Interlinear Hebrew-English Translation*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Progressive Printers, 1961.
- Chana and Ariel Bloch *The Song of Songs*. New York: Random House, 1995 [rev. eds. 1998, 2006].
- Marcia Falk *The Song of Songs: a New Translation and Interpretation*. New York: HarperCollins, 1990 ed.
- Marcia Falk *The Song of Songs: Love Lyrics from the Bible*. Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2004 ed.
- Robert Gordis *The Song of Songs: a Study, Modern Translation, and Commentary*. New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1961.
- John R. Kohlenberger III *The NIV Interlinear Hebrew-English Old Testament*, vol. 3: 1 Chronicles ~ Song of Songs. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1982.
- Marvin H. Pope *The Song of Songs: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. New York: Doubleday, 1977. The Anchor Bible 7c.

Translations without accompanying Hebrew text

[versions of the Holy Bible, chronologically listed]

Authorised/King James Version, 1611.
Revised Standard Version, 1946-1952.
Jerusalem Bible, 1966.
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New English Bible: The Old Testament, 1970.
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New International Version, 1978.
New Jerusalem Bible, 1985.
New Revised Standard Version, 1989.
Revised English Bible, 1989.

- Robert Graves *The Song of Songs*. New York: Clarkson N. Potter, 1973.
- Peter Jay *The Song of Songs*. London: Anvil Press, 1975 [new ed. 1998].
- Leroy Waterman *The Song of Songs, Translated and Interpreted as a Dramatic Poem*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1948.
- Diane Wolkstein *The First Love Stories: from Isis and Osiris to Tristan and Iseult*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991.

Critical commentaries on translation issues

In their editions cited above, Chania and Ariel Bloch, and Marcia Falk especially, present extensive and exceptionally illuminating discussions about issues of translation raised by the *Song*, both generally, and with regard to specific cruxes. Their arguments can be supplemented by

David B. Brooks, 'Song of Songs: a Comparison of Texts', at www.adath-shalom.ca/cant_db.htm, (2005)

Lucille Day, 'In the Hidden Garden: Two Translations of the Song of Songs', *Hudson Review*, 48 (1964), 259-69.

Leo W. Schwartz, 'On Translating the "Song of Songs"', *Judaism*, 13 (1964), 64-76.