

# The Song of Songs

(a.k.a. The Song of Solomon)

The Song of songs, which is Solomon's.

## Act I, Scene 1: The Race (1:1-4)

*(The maidens sing praises to the king and compete to be worthy of his affection.)*

*The Shepherdess*

Let him kiss me<sup>1</sup> with the kisses<sup>2</sup> of his mouth.<sup>3</sup>  
Truly your caresses<sup>4</sup> are better than wine.<sup>5</sup>  
For fragrance, your oils are pleasing.<sup>6</sup>  
Your name<sup>7</sup> is like oil as it pours out,  
Therefore the maidens love you.  
Draw<sup>8</sup> me after<sup>9</sup> you; Let us run.<sup>10</sup>  
The king would bring<sup>11</sup> me to his secret chambers.<sup>12</sup>  
We will rejoice greatly<sup>13</sup> and make merry<sup>14</sup> with you.  
Let us commemorate<sup>15</sup> your caresses<sup>16</sup> as better than wine!  
Sincerely<sup>17</sup> do they love you.

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<sup>1</sup>The Hebrew *yeshaqeini* puns on *yashqeini*, "let him drink" or, as Hitzig and Bottcher translate, "let him give me to drink."

<sup>2</sup>*Neshiqah* is the noun form of the Hebrew verb *nashaq* which means to "fasten," and is identical to *nasdaq* which means to "catch fire – burn, kindle. Hence, *neshiqah* means a "fastening of the mouth" that ignites (such as a kiss). Alternatively, it can mean a weapon or an armed man (a weapon is fastened to the man).

<sup>3</sup>"Mouth" in Hebrew (*peh*) can also mean "command."

<sup>4</sup>*Dodeka* means handling the breasts. The Greek Septuagint translates this word as *mastoi*, referring to the breasts, as kneaded up. Cf. Ezekiel 23:3, "There their breasts were squashed, and there the nipples of their virginity were handled" (CLV).

<sup>5</sup>Wine, by implication, intoxication and banqueting.

<sup>6</sup>This line is a double entendre. *Reyach* ("fragrance") is also a technical term for a sacrifice to God [H7381; cf. BDB]. The word translated as "oil" (*shemen*) is semen in Hebrew, an oil for anointing which symbolizes fertility and fruitfulness. *Shemen* is most likely the origin of the Latin term semen ("seed"), which was passed on to English. So, this line also reads "As an offering to God, your semen is pleasing." Cf. Leviticus 1:9, "It is an ascent offering, a fire offering, a fragrant odor to Yahweh" (CLV).

<sup>7</sup>A man's "name" in Hebrew implied his honor, authority, character and any achievements or distinguished qualities he is celebrated for. The Hebrew word for "name" is derived from *shem*, which carries the idea of a definite and conspicuous *position*.

<sup>8</sup>*Mashak* means to "draw" or "drag" and has a wide variety of applications: e.g. to attract (draw to oneself), to scatter seed (draw along in sowing), to draw out a sound, to drag off, to stretch out, to draw out (prolong) an experience.

<sup>9</sup>*Achar* is generally used as a preposition ("after") and properly means "the hind part" (i.e., "from behind.") *Achar* modifies the various innuendos of *mashak* in this line (see Note 5).

<sup>10</sup>The Septuagint translates this line as *dramoumen* (from the root *trecho*, meaning "we will exercise ourselves.") The HELPS Word-studies defines *trecho* as "properly, to run (like an athlete competing in the ancient Greek games)." It figuratively means to "advance speedily, like an athlete moving forward with full effort and directed purpose. [It] conveys intense desire to get to the goal as quickly as possible." The Septuagint also expands this line to read "we will run [exercise ourselves] for the fragrance of your oils." Cf. 1 Corinthians 9:24, "Are you not aware that those racing in a stadium are, indeed, all racing, yet one is obtaining the prize? Thus be racing that you may be grasping it" (CV).

<sup>11</sup>The Hebrew root *bo* has a variety of applications: e.g. come (in or upon), bring, carry, call, eat, enter into, fetch, besiege, invade, fall upon.

<sup>12</sup>Double-entendre: *Cheder* can mean either "inner chamber" or [the woman's] "innermost parts."

<sup>13</sup>Hebrew *gil*, to spin around under the influence of violent emotion (rejoicing.) The Septuagint translates this word as *agalliaó* (to exult or rejoice greatly). The HELPS Word-studies defines *agalliaó* as "getting so glad one jumps in celebration; to exult (boast) because so experientially joyful."

<sup>14</sup>In the Septuagint, *euphrainó*. HELPS Word-studies definition: having a merry outlook (cheery state of mind) because feeling the sense of victory.

<sup>15</sup>The Hebrew root *zakar* carries the image of burning incense, an act done in remembrance. In noun form, *zakar* means "male."

<sup>16</sup>*Dodeka* (see Note 4).

<sup>17</sup>The Hebrew for "rightly" (*meshar*) comes from *yashar* which means "to be smooth."

## **Act I, Scene 2: Seeking the King (1:5-8)**

*(The shepherdess is self-conscious of her low status as a laborer, but has beautified herself to the best of her ability and now desires to see the king.)*

*The Shepherdess*

Dark am I, but lovely, daughters of Jerusalem,  
Like the nomadic tents of Kedar,  
Like the pleasure tents of Solomon.  
Do not stare at me because I am dark,  
Because the sun has scorched me.  
My mother's sons were angry with me.  
They appointed me keeper of the vineyards.  
Over my own vineyard I had not the custody.  
Tell me, you whom my soul loves,  
Where do you graze your flock?  
Where do you rest them at noon?  
Why should I be like a veiled woman  
Beside the flocks of your companions?

*The Daughters of Jerusalem*

If you do not know for yourself, loveliest among women,  
Go forth on the trail of the flock,  
And graze your doelings by the tents of the shepherds.

## **Act I, Scene 3: The Incense Offering (3:6-8)**

*(The shepherdess finds the king outside the city and is greeted by an awe-inspiring scene...)*

*The Shepherdess*

Who is she ascending from the wilderness  
As pillars of smoke,  
A burning incense with myrrh and frankincense,  
With all the powders of the merchant?  
Behold, the couch of Solomon!  
Sixty mighty men surround it,  
Of the mighty men of Israel,  
All of them holding a large broadsword, instructed in warfare.  
Every man has his sword upon his thigh,  
For terror in the night.

## **Act I, Scene 4: Exciting the Stallions (6:12; 1:9-11; 4:4-7)**

*(The shepherdess finds herself drawn into the midst of the noble warriors...)*

*The Shepherdess*

Before I knew it,

My soul set me among the chariots of my noble tribe.

*The King*

To my mare among the chariots of Pharaoh  
I liken you my dear.  
How lovely are your cheeks with braided hair,  
Your neck with strings of beads.  
We shall make braids of gold for you,  
With specks of silver.  
Your neck is like the tower of David, built for adornment;  
A thousand shields are hung on it,  
And all the projectiles of the mighty men.  
Your two breasts are like two fawns,  
Twins of a gazelle that graze among the lilies.  
While the day is cool, and the shadows flee away,  
I shall go to the mountain of myrrh,  
And to the hill of frankincense.  
All of you is lovely, my shepherdess.  
And there is no blemish in you.

**Act I, Scene 5: The Vineyards of En-Gedi (1:15-17; 7:11-13; 1:12-14)**

*(The king and the shepherdess escape to the countryside for a romantic getaway.)*

*The King*

How lovely you are, my dear!  
How lovely you are;  
Your eyes are doves!

*The Shepherdess*

How lovely you are, my daddy, indeed so pleasant!  
Indeed, our couch is shaded.  
The rafters of our houses are cedars,  
Our coffer are firs.  
Do come, my daddy, let us go forth to the field;  
Let us lodge among the henna bushes;  
Let us go early to the vineyards;  
Let us see if the vine has budded,  
If the bloom has opened,  
And if the pomegranates have blossomed;  
There I shall give my breasts to you.  
The mandrakes give forth their fragrance,  
And at our doors are all fine fruits,  
Both new and stored,  
That I have secluded for you, my daddy.

While the king was in his surroundings,  
My nard gave forth its fragrance  
A sachet of myrrh is my daddy to me,

Lodged between my breasts.  
A cluster of henna is my daddy to me,  
In the vineyards of En Gedi.

**Act I, Scene 6: Under the Apple Tree (8:5a; 2:1-3; 8:5b; 8:1-3)**

*(The king returns to the city with the shepherdess leaning on his arm. A crowd gathers to marvel at the new girl. The shepherdess reflects fondly on her intimate time while she yearns to be even more intimate with the king.)*

*The Daughters of Jerusalem*

Who is this ascending from the wilderness,  
Intimately leaning on her daddy?

*The Shepherdess*

I am but a plain flower of Sharon,  
A lily of the lowland.

*The King*

As a lily among the thistles,  
So is my dear among the daughters.

*The Shepherdess*

As an apple tree among the trees of the forest,  
So is my daddy among the sons;  
In his shade I covet to sit,  
And his fruit is sweet to my throat.  
Under the apple tree I roused you;  
There your mother travailed with you;  
There she travailed and gave birth to you.  
O that you were like a brother to me,  
Who suckled at the breasts of my mother!  
Then if I found you outside I would kiss you,  
And no one would despise me.  
I would take you and lead you to my mother's house,  
Who has taught me.  
I would have you drink spiced wine,  
The pressed out juice of my pomegranate.  
His left hand under my head,  
And his right arm embraces me.  
I adjure you, daughters of Jerusalem,  
By the gazelles or by the hinds of the field:  
Do not awaken, and do not rouse up love  
Until it wishes.

~ END of ACT I ~

## Act II, Scene 1: Praise Her (6:4-9)

*(The shepherdess is dressed like a fearsome queen and given a royal beauty treatment for the king. All gather around to admire and praise her preeminent awe-inspiring beauty.)*

*The King*

You are beautiful my dear, as Tirzah,  
Becoming as Jerusalem,  
Dreadful as an army with banners.  
Turn away your eyes from my presence,  
For they incite me.  
Your hair is like a flock of goats that ripples down from Gilead.  
Your teeth are like a flock of sheep that ascends from the washing;  
All of them have their twins,  
And not one among them is bereaved;  
Like a slice of pomegranate are your cheeks behind your veil.  
Sixty queens, there are, and eighty concubines,  
And maidens without number,  
But just one is she, my dove, my flawless one,  
The only one of her mother,  
The choice one of her who bore her.  
Daughters see her and call her blessed;  
Queens and concubines, let them praise her.

## Act II, Scene 2: The Dance (6:13-7:5; 6:10)

*(The shepherdess, now dubbed the Shulammitte, performs an erotic sword dance...)*

*The King's Men*

Turn back, turn back, O Shulammitte;  
Turn back, turn back, that we may behold you.

*The King*

What do you behold in the Shulammitte?  
She comes in the manner of the dance of the camps.

*The King's Men*

How beautiful are your sandaled footsteps, O noble daughter;  
The curves of your thighs are like eardrops,  
The handiwork of a true craftsman.  
Your navel is like a goblet, well-formed,  
May it never lack mixed wine;  
Your belly is like a bundle of wheat,  
Fenced about by lilies.  
Your two breasts are like two fawns,  
Twins of a gazelle;  
Your neck is like an ivory tower;  
Your eyes are like pools in Heshbon

By the gate of Bath-rabbim;  
Your nose is like the tower of Lebanon,  
Watching the face of Damascus.  
Your head upon you is like Carmel,  
And the flowing tresses of your head are like purple.  
A king is bound by the strands.  
Who is this who gazes forth as the dawn,  
Beautiful as the moon,  
Dazzling as the sun,  
Dreadful as an army with banners?

### **Act II, Scene 3: Fertilizing the Palm Tree (7:6-10)**

*(The king declares that the Shulammitte is ripe and ready...)*

*The King*

How beautiful and how sensuous you are,  
O love, in your luxuries.  
This is your stature: It is like the palm tree,  
And your breasts like clusters of dates.  
I said, "Let me climb up the palm tree;  
Let me take hold of its stalks.  
Oh that your breasts may become like the clusters of the grapevine,  
And the scent on your nose like apples,  
And your throat as the finest wine.

*The Shepherdess (now the Shulammitte)*

May it flow smoothly to my daddy,  
Gliding gently over lips and teeth.  
I am my daddy's,  
And his urges are towards me.

### **Act II, Scene 4: The House of Wine (2:4-7)**

*(The Shulammitte is brought to the wine house where she is given all the love she can endure.)*

*The Shulammitte*

He brings me to the house of wine,  
And he sets me in place for the love feast.<sup>18</sup>  
Strengthen me with raisin-cakes,<sup>19</sup>  
Refresh me with apples,  
For I am sick with love.  
His left hand is under my head,  
And his right arm embraces me.

I adjure you, daughters of Jerusalem,

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<sup>18</sup>Translated from the *Septuagint*. Most Hebrew translations read, "And his banner over me is love."

<sup>19</sup>The *Septuagint* reads "strengthen me with ointments."

By the gazelles or by the hinds of the field:  
Do not awaken, and do not rouse up love  
Until it wishes.

~ END of ACT II ~

### Act III, Scene 1: The Dream (5:2-6:3)

*(The Shulammitte has now returned to the harem quarters. As she sleeps, she has a vivid dream...)*

*The Shulammitte*

I was asleep, yet my heart was awake;  
Listen, my daddy is knocking!

“Open to me, my sister, my dear,  
My dove, my flawless one,  
For my head is filled with dew,  
My locks with moisture of the night.”

“I have removed my tunic; how can I put it on again?  
I have washed my feet; how can I soil them again?”

My daddy put forth his hand into the hole,  
And my insides clamored for him.  
I rose up to open for my daddy;  
My hands dripped with myrrh,  
And my fingers with overflowing myrrh—  
On the handles of the latch.  
I opened for my daddy,  
But my daddy had vanished; he had gone.  
My soul went forth for his utterance;  
I sought him, but I did not find him;  
I called him, but he did not answer me.  
The guards who encircle the city found me;  
They struck me; they crushed me;  
They lifted my garment off me, those guards of the walls.  
I adjure you, daughters of Jerusalem,  
If you find my daddy, what shall you tell him?  
That I am sick with love!

*Daughters of Jerusalem*

How is your daddy better than another daddy,  
Loveliest among women?  
How is your daddy better than another daddy  
That you so adjure us?

*The Shulammitte*

My daddy is bright and ruddy,  
Preeminent among ten thousand.

His head is the purest gold.  
His hair is pendulous, dark as a raven.  
His eyes are like doves beside the water brooks,  
Washed in milk, seated by a brimming pool.  
His cheeks are like beds of spices, bringing forth a sweet aroma.  
His lips are like lilies dripping with overflowing myrrh.  
His arms are like rods of gold filled with topaz;  
His torso is like sculpted ivory, decorated with sapphire.  
His legs are like pillars of marble, set on sockets of fine gold.  
His appearance is like Lebanon, excellent as its cedars.  
The words of his mouth are sweetness,  
And all of him is coveted.  
This is my daddy, and this is my dearest, daughters of Jerusalem.

*Daughters of Jerusalem*

Where has your daddy gone to, loveliest among women?  
Which way has your daddy turned?  
Let us seek him with you.

*The Shulammite*

My daddy has gone down to his garden,  
To the beds of spices,  
To graze in the gardens  
And to gather lilies.  
I am my daddy's, and my daddy is mine.  
He is grazing among the lilies.

**Act III, Scene 2: Springtime in Bloom (2:8-13)**

*(Springtime has returned and the Shulammite is overjoyed to hear the king returning to her house.)*

*The Shulammite*

Listen, my daddy!  
Behold how he comes,  
Leaping upon the mountains,  
Skipping upon the hills!  
My daddy is like a gazelle  
Or a fawn of the deer;  
Behold how he stands behind our house wall,  
Peering through the windows,  
Gazing forth through the lattices.  
My daddy called and said to me:  
"Rise up, you, my dear!  
My lovely, come you!  
For behold, the winter has passed;  
The rain is over and gone.  
The flowers appear in the land;  
The time of pruning has arrived,  
And the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land.



The fig tree ripens its green figs,  
And the vines blossom and give forth fragrance.  
Rise up, you, my dear!  
My lovely, come you!”

### **Act III, Scene 3: Dove Hunting (2:14)**

*(The Shulammitte runs off for a game of hide-and-seek...)*

*The King*

My dove, in the clefts of the rocks,  
In the concealment of the cliff,  
Let me see your appearance;  
Let me hear your voice;  
For your voice is sweet,  
And your appearance is lovely.

### **Act III, Scene 4: Fox Hunting (2:15-17)**

*(After “capturing” the Shulammitte, the king gives her an exhortation before running off to his garden.)*

*The King*

Get hold of the foxes for us,  
The little foxes that destroy the vineyards,  
For our vineyards are in bloom.

*The Shulammitte*

My daddy is mine, and I am his;  
He is grazing among the lilies.  
When the day is cool,  
And the shadows flee away,  
Return, my daddy, be like a gazelle  
Or a fawn of the deer on the sundered mountains.

### **Act III, Scene 5: Mother’s Blessing (3:1-5)**

*(Several nights have passed and the king has still not returned. The Shulammitte grows distressed and is overcome with desire. She decides to take matters into her own hands...)*

*The Shulammitte*

Upon my bed in the nights  
I sought him whom my soul loves;  
I sought him, yet I did not find him.  
Let me rise now, and I will go about the city,  
Through the streets and through the squares;  
I will seek him whom my soul loves.  
I sought him, yet I did not find him.

The guards who encircle the city found me.  
“He whom my soul loves, have you seen him?”  
Scarcely had I passed by them  
When I found him whom my soul loves;  
I seized him and would not slacken my grip on him,  
Until I brought him into my mother’s house,  
To the inner chamber of her who conceived me.

I have adjured you, daughters of Jerusalem,  
Why should you awaken, and why should you rouse up love,  
Until it should wish?

~ END of ACT III ~

### **Act IV, Scene 1: The Wedding (3:9-11)**

*(With the blessing of her mother, the king takes the Shulammitte as his bride. Wedding festivities commence.)*

King Solomon made a litter for himself  
From the wood of Lebanon.  
Its pillars he made of silver,  
Its bolster of gold,  
Its riding seat of purple,  
Its interior inlaid with love  
By the daughters of Jerusalem.  
Come forth, daughters of Zion, and see King Solomon,  
With the crown with which his mother crowned him  
On the day of his wedding,  
And on the day of the rejoicing of his heart.

### **Act IV, Scene 2: Milk & Honey (4:1-3, 8-11)**

*(More wedding festivities...)*

*The King*

How lovely you are, my dear!  
How lovely you are!  
Your eyes are doves behind your veil;  
Your hair is like a flock of goats that ripples down from Mount Gilead.  
Your teeth are like a flock of newly shorn sheep that ascends from the washing;  
All of them have their twins,  
And not one among them is bereaved;  
Your lips are like a thread of scarlet,  
And your mouth is seemly,  
Like a slice of pomegranate are your cheeks behind your veil.  
With me from Lebanon, O bride,  
Come with me from Lebanon;  
Regard the scene from the summit of Amana,  
From the summit of Shenir and Hermon,  
From the dens of lions,  
From the mountain ranges of leopards.

You ravish my heart, my sister,  
O bride, you ravish my heart,  
With one glance from your eyes,  
With one coil of your necklace.  
How lovely are your caresses,<sup>20</sup> my sister, my bride,  
How much better are your caresses than wine,  
And the fragrance of your oils than all spices!  
Your lips drip with flowing honey, O bride;  
Honey and milk are under your tongue,  
And the scent of your garment is like the scent of Lebanon.

**Act IV, Scene 3: A Paradise of Pomegranates (4:12-15; 6:11; 8:13; 4:16-5:1a; 8:14; 5:1b)**

*(Even more wedding festivities... and much joy for all.)*

*The King*

You are a garden locked, my sister, my bride,  
A garden locked, a spring sealed.  
Your runners form a paradise of pomegranates,  
With the finest fruit,  
Henna with nards,  
Nard and saffron, reed and cinnamon,  
With all the woods of frankincense, myrrh and aloes,  
With all the foremost spices.  
You are a spring for gardens,  
A well of living waters,  
Even those flowing from Lebanon.  
I descended to the walnut garden  
To see the pollination about the watercourse,  
To see whether the vine had budded  
And the pomegranates had flowered.  
You who are dwelling in the gardens,  
Friends are attending to your voice;  
Let me hear it.

*The Shulammitte (now the Bride)*

Awake, north wind, and come south wind;  
Blow on my garden that its spices may flow;  
Let my daddy come to his garden  
That he may eat its fine fruit.

*The King*

I come to my garden, my sister, my bride;  
I gather in the myrrh with my spices;  
I eat my honeycomb with my honey;  
I drink my wine with my milk.

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<sup>20</sup>*Dodayik*, feminine form of *dodeka* (see Note 4).

*The Bride*

Hasten away, my daddy,  
And be like a gazelle  
Or a fawn of the deer  
On the mountains of spices!  
Eat, O friends!  
Drink, and drink freely, O daddies!

**Act IV, scene 4: Strong as Death (8:6-7)**

*(The bride entreats her groom to make her his most treasured possession. As she does so, she provides a profound commentary to the audience on the nature of sexual desire, jealousy, sexual temptation, and true love.)*

*The Bride*

Place me like a seal upon your heart,  
Like a seal upon your arm,  
For love is strong as death,  
Its jealousy as harsh as the grave,  
Its burning coals as burning coals of fire,  
The flame of Yah.  
Many waters cannot quench love,  
Nor can streams overwhelm it.  
If a man should give all the wealth of his house for love,  
People would despise, yea despise him.

~ END of ACT IV ~

**Epilogue, Scene 1: A Virgin in Bloom (8:8-10)**

*(The next Shulammitte comes of age.)*

*The Brothers*

We have a young sister,  
And her breasts are not yet grown.  
What shall we do for our sister  
On the day when she is spoken for?  
If she is a wall,  
We shall build a battlement of silver upon it,  
And if she is a door,  
We shall buttress it with planks of cedar.

*The Sister*

I am a wall,  
And my breasts like towers;  
I have, then, become in his eyes  
Like one providing peace.

## Epilogue, Scene 2: The Lord of Abundance (8:11-12)

*(The glory of Solomon's "vineyard" is described in brief and we are introduced to the essential role of the "keepers" of the vineyard.)*

For Solomon, there was a vineyard<sup>21</sup> in Baal-hamon;  
He gave out the vineyard to keepers;  
A man would bring for its fruit a thousand silver pieces.  
I have my own vineyard before me;  
The thousand are for you, Solomon,  
And two hundred for the keepers of its fruit.

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<sup>21</sup>For the metaphoric meaning of a vine, cf. Psalm 128:3, "Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house; your children will be like olive shoots around your table."