# The Song of Songs

Title/Superscription

1:1 Solomon's Most Excellent Love Song 3

**1 tn** The preposition ל in אשר לשלמה ('asher lishlomoh) has been taken as: (1) authorship: "which is written by Solomon." The lamed of authorship (also known as lamed auctoris) is well attested in Hebrew (see GKC 421 §130.b), particularly in the Psalms (e.g., Pss 18:1; 30:1; 34:1; 51:1; 52:1; 54:1; 56:1; 57:1; 59:1; 60:1; 63:1; 72:1); (2) dedication: "which is dedicated for Solomon." The lamed of dedication is attested in Ugaritic psalms dedicated to Baal or about Baal (CTA 6.1.1 = UT 49.1); or (3) topic: "which is about/concerning Solomon." The lamed of topic is attested in Hebrew (e.g., 1 Chr 24:20) and in Ugaritic, e.g., Ib I "About Baal" (CTA 6.1.1 = UT 49.1). The b is most likely denoting authorship. The b followed by a name in the superscription of a poetic composition in the OT, usually (if not always) denotes authorship. Just as the superscription לְדֵוֶר ( $l^e david$ ) claims Davidic authorship within the Psalter, the heading claims Solomonic authorship. Whether or not this attribution is historically reliable or simply a matter of Jewish tradition is debated in scholarship, just as the Davidic superscriptions in the Psalter are debated (see study note on the word "Song" in the superscription).

2 tn Heb "the song of songs." The genitive construct שֵׁיר השירים (shir hashirim) is translated literally as "the song of songs" in the early versions: Greek LXX (ἀσμα ἀσμάτων, asma asmaton), Latin Vulgate (canticum canticorum) and Syriac Peshitta (tešbehat tešbehātā'). The phrase שֵׁיר הַשִּירִים may be understood in two ways: (1) The noun השירים is a plural of number ("songs") and functions as a genitive of composition: "the song composed of several songs," that is, the book is a unified collection (hence the singular שיר "song") composed of individual love songs (see note on the expression "Her Lover" in v. 1). (2) The expression may be a superlative genitive construction denoting par excellence (see IBHS 154 §9.5.3j; GKC 431 §133.i; R. J. Williams, Hebrew Syntax, 11, §44; 17-18, §80). For example, קרש קרשים (godesh qadashim, "the holy of holies") means the most holy place (Exod 29:37); אַלהִים וָאַרנִי הָאַרנִים ('elohe ha'elohim va'adone ha'adonim, "the God of Gods and Lord of Lords") means the Highest God and the Supreme Lord (Deut 10:17); and עבר עבר דים ('eved 'avadim, "a slave of slaves") means an abject slave (Gen 9:25). The title "the Song of Songs" is an expression of great esteem for the composition. It has been translated variously: "The Song of Songs, which is Solomon's" (KJV, NKJV, RSV, NRSV, NASB), "Solomon's Song of Songs" (NIV), "The most beautiful of songs, by Solomon" (TEV), "dedicated to," or "about Solomon" (TEV margin), "Solomon's most beautiful song" (CEV), "This is Solomon's song of songs, more wonderful than any other" (NLT).

**3 tn** Heb "song." The noun שיר (shir) may refer to a musical song that was sung (Exod 15:1; Num 21:17; Ps 33:3; Isa 42:10) or a poetic composition that was simply read (Deut 31:19, 21, 22; 30; 32:44) (BDB 1010 s.v. שיר). Several factors suggest that the Song of Songs was poetry to be read and enjoyed rather than sung: (a) its sheer length, (b) absence of musical notations or instrumental instructions, (c) testimony of Jewish tradition and interpretation, (d) lack of evidence of its musical performance in the history of Israel, and (e) comparison with ancient Egyptian love poetry. The term שיר here probably refers to love poetry (e.g., Isa 5:1) (BDB 1010 s.v. 1; W. L. Holladay, Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon, 368). The Song appears to be a collection of individual love songs rather than a single multistanza poem. For comparison of the Song of Songs with ancient Egyptian loves songs, see M. V. Fox, The Song of Songs and the Ancient Egyptian Love Songs, and J. B. White, Language of Love in the Song of Songs and

The Desire for Love

# The Beloved to Her Lover:4

1:2 Oh, how I wish you<sup>5</sup> would kiss me

Ancient Egyptian Poetry (SBLDS).

sn The Superscription "Solomon's Most Excellent Love Song" appears to be a late addition, just as many superscriptions in the Psalter appear to have been added to the psalms sometime after their original composition. R. E. Murphy (Song of Songs [Hermeneia], 119) notes that the use of the independent relative pronoun איני ("asher) in 1:1 sharply distinguishes the superscription from the body of the Song as a whole where the short form איני (she-) occurs thirty-two times (e.g., 1:6, 12; 6:5). The short form איני (she-) occurs frequently in Ecclesiastes which is traditionally attributed to Solomon. Therefore, it would appear that the superscription is a later addition to the Song. This, of course, raises the question whether or not the attribution of Solomonic authorship of the Song is historically reliable or simply a matter of later Jewish tradition.

4 tn The introductory headings that identify the speakers of the poems throughout the Song do not appear in the Hebrew text. They are supplied in the translation for the sake of clarity. These notations should not be misinterpreted as suggesting that the Song be interpreted as a drama. Throughout the Song, the notation "The Lover" refers to the young man, while "the Beloved" refers to the young woman. Since the Song of Songs appears to be a collection of individual love songs, the individual love poems within the collection might not have originally referred to the same young man and young woman in each case. Just as the Book of Proverbs contains proverbs composed by Solomon (10:1-22:16; 25:1-29:27) as well as proverbs composed by other wise men (22:17-24:34; 30:1-31:9), so the Song of Songs may contain love poems composed by Solomon or written about Solomon as well as love poems composed by or written about other young couples in love. Nevertheless, the final canonical form of this collection presents a unified picture of idyllic love between one man and one woman in each case. The young man in several of the individual love poems is explicitly identified as Solomon (3:7; 8:11-12), King Solomon (3:9, 11) or the king (1:4; 7:6). Some statements in the Song are consistent with a royal figure such as Solomon: references to Tirzah and Jerusalem (6:4) and to multiple queens and concubines (6:8). It is not so clear, however, whether Solomon is the young man in every individual poem. Nor is it clear that the same young woman is in view in each love poem. In several poems the young woman is a country maiden working in a vineyard (1:5-6; 8:11-12); however, the young woman in another poem is addressed as "O prince's daughter" (7:2). The historian notes, "Solomon loved many women, especially the daughter of Pharaoh" (1 Kgs 11:1). So it would be surprising if the Song devoted itself to only one of Solomon's many liaisons. The Song may simply be a collection of love poems written at various moments in Solomon's illustrious career as a lover of many women. It may also include love poems written about other young lovers that were collected into the final form of the book that presents a portrait of idyllic love of young lovers.

5 tn Heb "May he kiss me...." The shift from 3rd person masculine singular forms ("he" and "his") in 1:2a to 2nd person masculine singular forms ("your") in 1:2b-4 has led some to suggest that the Beloved addresses the Friends in 1:2a and then her Lover in 1:2b-4. A better solution is that the shift from the 3rd person masculine singular to 2nd person masculine singular forms is an example of heterosis of person: a poetic device in which the grammatical person shifts from line to line (M. H. Pope, Song of Songs [AB], 297). The

passionately!1 For your lovemaking2 is more delightful3 than wine.4 1:3 The fragrance<sup>5</sup> of your colognes<sup>6</sup> is

delightful;7

third person is put for the second person (e.g, Gen 49:4; Deut 32:15; Ps 23:2-5; Isa 1:29; 42:20; 54:1; Jer 22:24; Amos 4:1; Micah 7:19; Lam 3:1; Song 4:2; 6:6) (E. W. Bullinger, Figures of Speech, 524-25). Similar shifts occur in ancient Near Eastern love literature (cf. S. N. Kramer, The Sacred Marriage Rite, 92, 99). Most translations render 1:2 literally and preserve the shifts from 3rd person masculine singular to 2nd person masculine singular forms (KJV, AV, NASB, NIV); others render 1:2 with 2nd person masculine singular forms throughout (RSV, NJPS).

1 tn Heb "May he kiss me with the kisses of his mouth!" The phrase יְשֶׁבֶנִי מִנְשִׁיקוֹת (yishshaqeni minn<sup>e</sup>shiqot, "kiss me with kisses") is a cognate accusative construction used for emphasis.

**2 tc** The MT vocalizes consonantal דּרֶּיךְ as בּרִיךְ (dodekha, "your loves"; mpl noun from דּוֹר, dod, "love" + 2nd person masculine singular suffix). The LXX and Vulgate reflect the vocalization בֶּיֶּדְ (daddekha, "your breasts"; mpl noun from דָּדָר, dad, "breast" + 2nd person masculine singular suffix). This alternate tradition was well known; it was followed by Hippolytus of Rome (d. 235) in his exposition of Canticles 1:2 and by Rabbi Yohanan of Tiberias (3rd century A.D.) as recorded in the Jewish midrashim on Canticles Rabbah 1:2.2. However, the MT vocalization is preferred. In terms of external evidence, the MT vocalization tradition is generally more reliable. In terms of internal evidence, the LXX form לַבֶּילָ (daddekha, "your [male!] breasts") is a bit shocking, to say the least. On the other, the plural form דּוֹרָים (dodim, "loves") is used in the Song to refer to multiple expressions of love or multiple acts of lovemaking (e.g., 1:4; 4:10; 5:1; 7:13 [ET 12]).

tn Although it may be understood in the general sense meaning "love" (Song 1:4), the term דוד (dod) normally means "lovemaking" (Prov 7:18; Song 4:10; 7:12[13]; Ezek 16:8; 23:17). The plural form רְּדֶיק (dodekha, lit. "your lovemakings") is probably not a plural of number but an abstract plural (so BDB 187 s.v. דוד 3).

3 tn Heb "better than." With the comparison of lovemaking to wine, the idea is probably "more intoxicating than wine" or "more delightful than wine."

4 tn The young woman compares his lovemaking to the intoxicating effects of wine. A man is to be "intoxicated" with the love of his wife (Prov 5:20). Wine makes the heart glad (Deut 14:26; Judg 9:13; Ps 104:15) and revives the spirit (2 Sam 16:1-2; Prov 31:4-7). It is viewed as a gift from God, given to enable man to enjoy life (Eccl 2:24-25; 5:18). The ancient Egyptian love poems use the imagery of wine and intoxication to describe the overwhelming effects of sexual love. For example, an ancient Egyptian love song reads: "I embrace her and her arms open wide; I am like a man in Punt, like someone overwhelmed with drugs. I kiss her and her lips open; and I am drunk without beer" (ANET 467-69).

**5 tn** The preposition ל ( $l^e$ ) of לְרֵיהָ ( $l^e$ rekha) has been understood in three ways: (a) dative of reference: "with respect to fragrance [your perfumes are pleasing]" (see GKC 430 §133. d); (b) asseverative or emphatic: "indeed the fragrance [of your perfumes is pleasing!" (see R. J. Williams, Hebrew Syntax, 50-51, §283); or (c) comparative: "[your lovemaking is better than wine], indeed better the scent [of precious ointments]" (W. F. Albright, "Archaic Survivals in the Text of Canticles," Hebrew and Semitic Studies, 2, n. 4).

• tn Heb "the scent of your oils." The term שֶּׁבֶּוֹ (shemen, "cologne") refers to perfumes or colognes (Eccl 7:1; 10:1; Song 4:10). In Israel bodily oils were expensive (1 Kgs 17:12ff; 2 Kgs 2:4ff). Possession of oils and perfumes was a sign of prosperity and luxury (Deut 32:8; 33:24; Job 29:6; Prov 21:17; Ezek 16:13, 20). Wearing cologne was associated with joy (Ps 45:8; Eccl 9:8; Isa 61:3) because they were worn on festive occasions (Prov 27:9).

**7 sn** The term מובים (tovim, "pleasing") refers to what is pleasant to the olfactory senses (BDB 373 s.v. II מוב 1.c) (e.g., your name<sup>8</sup> is like the finest<sup>9</sup> perfume.<sup>10</sup> No wonder the young women<sup>11</sup> adore<sup>12</sup>

Jer 6:20).

f sn The term אָשֶׁבֶּי ( $sh^emekha$ , "your name") may be a metonymy of association for her lover. In Hebrew idiom, the name often represents the person (e.g., 1 Sam 25:25).

**9 tn** The meaning of the phrase שֵׁמֵן תּוּרֶק (shemen turaq) is difficult to determine; several options have been proposed: (1) Traditionally, the term תורָם is taken as a verb (Hophal imperfect 3rd person feminine singular from רִיק, riq, "to pour out") which functions as an attributive adjective modifying the noun שמן ("oil, perfume"): "poured out oil." The phrase is taken this way by LXX ἒλαιον έκχεομενον ("oil poured out") which seems to reflect a Hebrew Vorlage of a passive verb functioning adjectivally. Accordingly, the phrase is traditionally translated "ointment/oil poured forth/poured out" (KJV, NKJV, ASV, NIV, RSV, NRSV, NJB), "purified oil" (NASB) or "spreading perfume" (NAB, CEV). However, this is syntactically awkward because: (a) the noun שֵׁבֵּוֹן ("oil") is masculine (BDB 1032 s.v. שֶׁמֵן) but the verb הורֶק ("poured out") is feminine (3rd person feminine singular); and (b) this would demand heterosis of the verb for an adjective function. (2) Aquila, who is known for his woodenly literal translation technique, reads ἒλαιον ἐκκενωθὲν (elaion ekkenōthen, "oil poured out") which reflects a passive participle functioning adjectivally. perhaps מורק (murag; Hophal participle ms from ביק "to pour out"). This involves simple orthographic confusion between  $\pi$ and a. This might be reflected in Qumran because Baillet's restoration of 6QCant reads מרקחת מורקה (cited in BHS apparatus "c-c") which would be vocalized מִרְקַהַת מוּרקָה (mirqakhat murgah, "perfumed poured out"). However, Baillet's restoration is questioned by some scholars. (3) The BHS editors suggest emending MT תורק (turag) to the noun תמרוק (tamrug, "purification"), used for oil of purification (e.g., Esth 2:3, 9, 12): שֶׁמֵן הַמְּרוּק (shemen tamruq) would mean "oil of purification" or "purified oil." (4) A simpler solution is to take תורק as a previously unrecognized noun that is related to the Ugaritic noun trg which refers to high grade cosmetic oil (UT 145.20; 19.371). This approach is adopted by one other translation: "Your name is like finest oil" (NJPS).

10 sn The similar sounding terms שַּׁי (shem, "name") and שבן (shemen, "perfume") create a wordplay (paronomasia).

**11 sn** The term עלמה ('almah, "young woman") refers to a young woman who is of marriageable age or a newly married young woman, usually before the birth of her first child (HALOT 835-36 s.v. עַלְמָה; BDB 761 s.v. עֵלְמָה) (e.g., Gen 24:43; Exod 2:8; Ps 68:26; Prov 30:19; Song 1:3; 6:8; Isa 7:14). The only other use of the term "young women" (על מות) in the Song refers to the young women of Solomon's harem (Song 6:8). The root עלם denotes the basic idea of "youthful, strong, passionate" (HALOT 835 s.v. III עלם). While the term עַלמָה ("young woman") may be used in reference to a young woman who is a virgin, the term itself does not explicitly denote "virgin." The Hebrew term which explicitly denotes "virgin" is a (betulah) which refers to a mature young woman without any sexual experience with men (e.g., Gen 24:16; Exod 22:15-16; Lev 21:3; Deut 22:23, 28; 32:25; Judg 12:12; 19:24; 2 Sam 13:2, 18; 1 Kgs 1:2; 2 Chr 36:17; Esth 2:2-3, 17, 19; Job 31:1; Pss 45:15; 78:63; 148:12; Isa 23:4; 62:5; Jer 2:32; 31:3; 51:22; Lam 1:4, 18; 2:10, 21; 5:11; Ezek 9:6; Joel 1:8; Amos 9:13; Zech 9:17 (HALOT 166-7 s.v. בתולה; BDB 143 s.v. בתולה). The related noun בתולים ( $b^e tulim$ ) means "state of virginity" (Lev 21:13; Judg 11:37-38; Ezek 23:3, 8; Sir 42:10) and "evidence of virginity" (Deut 22:14-15, 17, 20) (HALOT 167 s.v. בתולים).

12 tn Heb "love."

# 1:4 Draw me<sup>1</sup> after you; let us hurry!<sup>2</sup> May the king<sup>3</sup> bring<sup>4</sup> me into

בּישֵׁי (mashakh, "draw") is a figurative expression (hypocatastasis) which draws an implied comparison between the physical acting of leading a person with the romantic action of leading a person in love. Elsewhere it is used figuratively of a master gently leading an animal with leather cords (Hos 11:4) and of a military victor leading his captives (Jer 31:3). The point of comparison might be that the woman wants to be the willing captive of the love of her beloved, that is, a willing prisoner of his love.

ל n The three verbs in this line are a good example of heterosis of person, that is, a shift from 2nd person masculine singular to 1st person common plural to 3rd person masculine singular forms: "בי מיבני (mashekheni, "draw me!"; Qal imperative 2nd person common singular from לְּבִישֶּׁה, mashakh, "to draw" + 1st person common singular suffix:), mashakh, "to draw" + 1st person common singular suffix:), (nanutsah, "let us run!"; Qal cohortative 1st person common plural from לוים, "תונה, "to run"), and בְּבִישְּׁה (hevi ani, "he has brought me" or "bring me!"; Hiphil perfect 3rd person masculine singular אוב, bo', "to bring" + 1st person common singular suffix). Heterosis from second to third person occurs elsewhere in the Song in 1:2-3; 4:2; 6:6 (e.g., Gen 49:4; Deut 32:15; Ps 23:2-5; Isa 1:29; 42:20; 54:1; Jer 22:24; Amos 4:1; Micah 7:19; Lam 3:1).

3 tn Or "O king, bring me into your chambers!" The article on the noun הַמֵּלֵך (hammelekh, "the king") may be taken in two ways: (1) the particularizing use of the article: "The king" (e.g., NIV: "The king has brought me into his chambers") or (2) the vocative use of the article: "O king!" (NJPS margin: "O king, bring me into your chambers!") (For the vocative use of the article, see GKC 405 §126.e; Joüon 2:506-7 §137.f; R. J. Williams, Hebrew Syntax, 19, §89; IBHS 247 §13.5.2c). The syntactical classification of the article is dependent upon: (1) Whether the MT reading of the 3rd person masculine singular suffix on חדריו (khadarav, "his chambers") is retained or whether the text is emended to the 2nd person masculine singular suffix form מדרך (khadrekha, "your chamber") as reflected in Syriac (see textual note below). (2) Whether הביאני (hevi'ani, Hiphil perfect 3rd person masculine singular from בוא, bo', "to bring" + 1st person common singular suffix) is classified as a perfect of past action ("The king has brought me into his chambers") or a precative perfect ("O king, bring me into your chambers!") (see syntactical note below). (3) Whether the consonantal form הביאני should be vocalized as הֵבְיאֵנִי (hevi'ani, Hiphil perfect 3rd person masculine singular + 1st person common singular suffix) as preserved in MT or as הֵבִיאֵנִי (havi'eni, Hiphil imperative 2nd person masculine singular + 1st person common singular suffix) as reflected in Symmachus and Syriac (see textual note below).

**4 tn** Or "has brought me." The verb הֵביאני (*hevi'ani*, Hiphil perfect 3rd person masculine singular אָב, bo', "to bring" + 1st person common singular suffix) may be classified in two ways: (1) perfect of past action: "The king has brought me into his chambers" or (2) precative perfect: "May the king bring me into his chambers!" (J. S. Deere, "Song of Solomon," BKCOT, 1012). While some older grammarians denied the existence of the precative (volitional) function of the perfect in Hebrew (e.g., S. R. Driver, Tenses in Hebrew, 25-26; GKC 312-13 §106.n, n. 2), its existence is accepted in more recent grammars (e.g., IBHS 494-95 §30.5.4d; Joüon 2:365 §112.k). While the perfect of past action is the more common use of the perfect, the context suggests the more rare precative. As IBHS 494-95 §30.5.4d notes, the precative can be recognized contextually by its parallelism with the other volitive forms. The parallelism of precative הֵבִיאָנִי ("bring me!") with the volitives in the two preceding parallel colons – בַּישֶׁבֵנִי (mashekheni, "draw me!"; Qal imperative 2nd person masculine singular from מֹשֵׁרָ, *mashakh*, "to draw" + 1st person common singular suffix:) and נְרוּצָה (narutsah, "let us run!"; Qal cohortative 1st person common plural from רוץ, ruts, "to run") - favors the precative function of the perfect. The volitive function of consonantal הביאני is reflected in Syriac. The BHS editors suggest revocalizing MT to בְּיַאֵנִי "bring me!" The precative function of the perfect הביאני may explain the origin of this variant vocalization tradition reflected in Syriac. In terms of connotation, the precative functions as a volitive as an example of the irreal modal or optative function of the perfect his<sup>5</sup> bedroom chambers!<sup>6</sup> *The Maidens*<sup>7</sup> *to the Lover:* 

(IBHS 494-95 §30.5.4d; Joüon 2:365 §112.k). In contrast to the use of the irreal perfect for situations which the speaker expresses as a wish without expectation of fulfillment (contraryto-fact situations, hypothetical assertions, and expressions of a wish that is not expected to be realized), the precative refers to situations the speaker expresses his desire for and expects to be realized (IBHS 494-95 §30.5.4d). It is used most often in contexts of prayers to God which the speakers expect to be answered (e.g., Pss 3:8; 22:22; 31:5-6). Here, she expresses her desire that her lover consummate their love in his bedroom chambers; she expects this desire to be realized one day (e.g., 4:1-5:1). There are, however, several problems with nuancing the form as a precative: (a) this would demand emending MT הַדְרָיו (khadarav, "his chambers") to הַדֶּרֶך (khadrekha, "your chamber[s]") - which is, however, reflected by Syriac Peshitta and Symmachus, and (b) it would demand nuancing the article on הַמֵּלֶךְ (hammelekh) as a vocative ("O king!").

5 to The MT reads the 3rd person masculine singular suffix on a plural noun הֲדְרָיִי (khadarav, "his chambers"). This is reflected in LXX, Targums, and Vulgate. However, the 2nd person masculine singular suffix on a singular noun הֲדִרָּדָּ (khadrekha, "your chambers") is reflected by Syriac Peshitta and Symmachus. See preceding note on the text-critical significance of these variant readings.

\$\$ tn The term הְּדֶּיךְ (kheder, "chamber") is used frequently in reference to a bedroom (Gen 43:30; Judg 15:1; 16:9; 2 Sam 13:10; 1 Kgs 1:15; Ps 105:30; Isa 26:20). It refers explicitly to a bedroom when used with the noun אַפְּבֶּב (nishkaw, "bed") in the expression הְּדֶּרֶב מְשְּבֶּב (Header 2: Sam 4:7; 2 Kgs 6:12; Eccl 10:20). The plural form הַדְרֶב (khadarav, "his chambers") functions as a plural of extension rather than a plural or number; it refers to one bedroom composed of several parts rather than referring to several different bedrooms. The expression "Bring me into your chambers" is a metonymy of cause for effect, that is, her desire for lovemaking in his bedroom chambers.

7 sn Normally in the Song, the person/gender of the pronouns and suffixes makes the identity of the speaker or addressee clear. However, in several places grammatical ambiguity makes it difficult to identify either the speaker or the addressee (e.g., 6:11-13; 7:9b). This is particularly true when 1st person common plural or 3rd person common plural verbs or suffixes are present (1:3[4]; 2:15; 5:1b; 8:8-9), as is the case in the three lines of 1:3b[4b]. There are four views on the identity of the speaker(s): (1) NASB attributes all three lines to the maidens, (2) NIV attributes the first two lines to the friends and the third line to the Beloved (= woman), (3) NJPS attributes all three lines to the Beloved, speaking throughout 1:2-4, and (4) the first line could be attributed to the young man speaking to his beloved, and the last two lines attributed to the Beloved who returns praise to him. The subjects of the 1st person common plural cohortatives and the 2sg suffixes have been taken as: (1) The maidens of Jerusalem, mentioned in 1:4[5] and possibly referred to as the 3rd person common plural subject of אָהֶבוּדֶ ('ahevukha, "they love you") in 1:3b[4b], using the 1st person common plural cohortatives in reference to themselves as they address her lover: "We (= maidens) will rejoice in you (= the young man)." (2) The Beloved using 1st person common plural cohortatives in a hortatory sense as she addresses her lover: "Let us (= the couple) rejoice in you (= the young man), let us praise your lovemaking..." (3) The Beloved using the 1st person common plural cohortatives in reference to herself - there are examples in ancient Near Eastern love literature of the bride using 1st person common plural forms in reference to herself (S. N. Kramer, The Sacred Marriage Rite, 92, 99) - as she addresses the young man: "We (= I) will rejoice in you (= the young man)." Note: This problem is compounded by the ambiguity of the gender on בֶּן (bakh, "in you") which appears to be 2nd person feminine singular but may be 2nd person masculine singular in pause (see note below).

We will<sup>1</sup> rejoice and delight in you;<sup>2</sup> we will praise<sup>3</sup> your love more than wine.

#### The Beloved to Her Lover:

How rightly4 the young women5 adore you!

1 tn Alternately, "Let us rejoice and delight in you." There is debate whether the cohortatives וְנֵינְלְּהְ מְּנֵילְהְ (ragilah, Qal cohortative steperson common plural from יָבוּי, gil, "to exult"), יְבְּייִלְּהְי (venishmekhah, Qal cohortative 1st person common plural from נְּיִבֶּילְהָ shamakh, "to rejoice") and נְיִבְילָה (nazkirah, Hiphil cohortative 1st person common plural from יְבִי, zhknar, "to praise") should be classified as (1) cohortatives of resolve, expressing the resolution or determination of the speakers to adopt or accomplish a course of action: "We will rejoice...we will delight...we will praise" (e.g., KJV, NASB, NIV) or (2) hortatory cohortatives, exhorting others to join in doing something: "Let us rejoice...let us delight...let us praise" (e.g., NJPS).

2 tn A shift occurs in 1:4 from 1st person common singular forms to 1st person common plural forms: "Draw me (מַשֶּבֶּר ני, mash<sup>e</sup>keni)...Let us run (נרוצָה, narutsah)...Bring me הַביאָני,, hevi'ani)...We will be glad נְגִילְהוֹ, nagilah)...We will rejoice in you (וְנִיבְּהוֹרְ, v<sup>e</sup>nishm<sup>e</sup>khah)...We will remember (נְלָּבִירָהוֹ, nazkirah)...They love you (אַהבוּדָ, 'ahevukha)...." Several translations and many commentators end the words of the Beloved at 1:4a and begin the words of the Friends in 1:4b and revert back to the words of the Beloved in 1:4c. The subject of the 1st person common plural forms may be the "young women" (עֵלְמוֹת) previously mentioned in 1:3. This is supported by the fact that in 1:3 the Beloved says, "The young women love you" (עֵלְמוֹת אֲהַבּוּךָ, 'alamot 'ahevukha) and in 1:4c she again says, "Rightly do they [the young women] love you" (בֵּישָׁרִים אֲהַבּוּךָ, mesharim 'ahevukha). On the other hand, in ANE love literature the bride often uses plural pronouns to refer to herself (S. N. Kramer, The Sacred Marriage Rite, 92, 99). Some commentators suggest that the young man is addressing his beloved because (bakh) appears to have a 2nd person feminine singular suffix. However, the suffix on בָּד is in pause (after the accent) therefore, the normal 2nd person masculine singular suffix בָּן has reduced to shewa. The parallelism with the 2nd person masculine singular suffix on דֹרֶיך (dodekha, "your love") supports the 2nd person masculine singular classification.

3 tn Alternately, "remember." The verb נְּיבִּירָה (nazkirah, Hiphil imperfect 1st person common plural from יָבָּר, zakhar) is traditionally rendered "we will remember" (KJV), but is better nuanced "we will extol" (NASB) or "we will praise" (NIV). The verb יבוי has a wide range of meanings: "to remember, call to mind" (Gen 8:1; Deut 24:9; Judg 8:34), "to name, mention" (Jer 20:9; 23:36; 31:20; Pss 63:7; 77:4), "to summon, command" (Nah 2:6), "to swear by" (Amos 6:10; 1 Chr 16:4), and "to praise, extol" (Exod 23:13; Josh 23:7; Pss 45:18 HT [45:17 ET]; 71:16; Isa 26:13; 48:1; 62:6). The Hiphil stem has four denotations, and "to remember" is not one of them: (1) "to take to court," (2) "to mention," (3) "to make known," and (4) "to praise, profess" (HALOT 269-70 s.v. I יבוי). NJPS offers a poetic nuance that plays upon the wine motif: "savoring it more than wine."

4 tn Alternately, "The righteous love you." Scholars debate whether בְּיִיבְּוּרִים (mesharim) should be taken as a substantive ("the righteous"), abstract noun ("righteousness"), or adverb ("rightly"). The LXX's εὐθύτης ἡγάτησεν σε (euthutēs ēgapēsen, "righteousness loves you") is awkward. The adverbial sense is preferred for several reasons: (1) The verb אֲבִּוֹבֵוּ ('ahevuka, "they love you") in 1:4c is repeated from 1:3c where it was used in reference to the maiden's love for her lover. (2) There is no group designated as "the righteous" elsewhere in the Song. (3) To introduce an additional party into this poetic unit is unnecessary when it can be easily understood as a reference to the maidens of 1:3c.

5 tn Heb "they love you." The words "the young women" do not appear in the Hebrew but are supplied in the translation for the sake of clarity. The shift from the 1st person common plural subjects in the three cohortatives – קיבי (nagilah, Qal cohortative 1st person common plural from גנילד, gil, "to exult"),

The Country Maiden and the Daughters of Jerusalem

#### The Beloved to the Maidens:

1:5 I am dark but lovely, O maidens<sup>6</sup> of Jerusalem, dark<sup>7</sup> like the tents of Qedar,<sup>8</sup> lovely<sup>9</sup> like the tent curtains<sup>10</sup> of

ונשמחה (venishmekhah, Qal cohortative 1st person common plural from שמח, shamakh, "to rejoice"), and נובירה (nazkirah, Hiphil cohortative 1st person common plural from זֶבר, zakhar, "to praise") - to the 3rd person common plural subject in the verb אָהֶבוּךְ ('ahevukha, Qal perfect 3rd person common plural from אָהֶב, 'ahev, "to love" + 2nd person masculine singular suffix) suggests to many scholars that a shift in speakers occurs at this point: the maidens praise the young man in the first two lines, while the Beloved affirms the appropriateness of their praise in the last line (e.g., NIV). However, the shift in person might simply be another example of heterosis of person (as already seen in 1:2-4a) - this time from first person to third person. Thus, the shift in grammatical person does not necessarily indicate a shift in speakers. It is possible that the maidens are speaking throughout all three lines, and that the third line should be nuanced, "How rightly we love you!"

6 tn Heb "O daughters of Jerusalem."

7 sn The term "dark" does not appear in the Hebrew in this line but is supplied in the translation from the preceding line for the sake of clarity. The poetic structure of this tricolon is an example of redistribution. The terms "black but beautiful" in the A-line are broken up – the B-line picks up on "black" and the C-line picks up on "beautiful." The Beloved was "black" like the rugged tents of Qedar woven from the wool of black goats, but "beautiful" as the decorative inner tent-curtains of King Solomon (so J. L. Kugel, The Idea of Biblical Poetry, 40; W. G. E. Watson, Classical Hebrew Poetry (JSOTSupl, 181).

ש sn The comparison of her dark, outdoors appearance to the "tents of Qedar" is quite fitting for two reasons. First, the name "Qedar" refers to an ancient Arabian tribe of bedouin who lived in tents and inhabited a region in northern Arabia. Their tents were traditionally woven from the wool of black goats. They were not beautiful to look at; they were rough, rustic, rugged, and weather-beaten. Second, the terms אין "נקר" (gedar, "Dedar") create a word-play because the root אין (gadar) means "dark, dirty" (HALOT 1072 s.v. אין). The point of the comparison is that the Beloved had dark skin and a rugged outdoors appearance because she had been forced to work outdoors, and so her skin had become dark as 1:6 states.

9 tn The term "lovely" does not appear in the Hebrew in this line but is supplied in the translation from the first line in this verse for the sake of clarity.

**10 sn** There is debate whether the terms "tents" אָהֵלִי ('ahale, "tents") and יריעות ( $y^e ri'ot$ , "tent-curtains") used here as synonyms or antonyms. The term אֹהֵל ('ohel, "tent") is often used in reference to an overall tent assembly, with particular emphasis on the external structure (e.g., Gen 4:20; 18:1; 31:33; Exod 26:13; 40:19; Judg 4:17; Isa 54:2; Jer 37:10) (HALOT 19 s.v. אהל ). The term "tent-curtains" (יִרִיעוֹה) is used to refer to (1) inner hanging curtains, such as decorative hangings or tapestries inside a tent (e.g., Exod 26:1-2, 7; Num 4:25) and (2) a tent as a whole (e.g., 2 Sam 7:2; Jer 4:20; 10:20; Hab 3:7) (HALOT 439 s.v. יְרִיעוֹר, The two terms are often used in parallelism as an A-B word pair (Isa 54:2; Jer 4:20; 10:20; 49:29; Hab 3:7). Like the "tents" (אַדֶּלִים) of Qedar which were made from the wool of black goats, "tentcurtains" (יריעוה) also were sometimes made from goat hair (Exod 26:7). If the two are synonymous, the point is that the tents of Oedar and the tent-curtains of Salmah were both black but beautiful. If the two terms are antonyms, the point is that the tents of Qedar are black but the tent-curtains of Salmah are beautiful. In either case, her point is that she is black, but nonetheless beautiful. Rabbinic midrash misses the point; it views the metaphor as contrasting her swarthy outward appearance with her inner beauty: "Just as the tents

Salmah.<sup>1</sup>
1:6 Do not stare at me because<sup>2</sup> I am dark, for<sup>3</sup> the sun has burned my skin.<sup>4</sup>
My brothers<sup>5</sup> were angry<sup>6</sup> with me; they made me the keeper of the vineyards. Alas, my own vineyard<sup>7</sup> I could not keep!<sup>8</sup>

of Kedar, although from outside they look ugly, black, and ragged, yet inside contain precious stones and pearls, so the disciples of the wise, although they look repulsive and swarthy in this world, yet have within them knowledge of the Torah, Scriptures, Mishnah, Midrash, Halachoth, Talmud, Toseftas and Haggadah" (Midrash Rabbah 4:54-55).

- 1 tc The MT vocalizes שַׁלְמֹה (shelmoh, "Solomon"); however, the BHS editors suggest the vocalization שֵׁלְמָה (shalmah); cf. NAB "Salma." Salmah is the name of an ancient Arabian tribe mentioned in Assyrian and South Arabic sources, as well as Targum Onqelos (Gen 15:19; Num 24:21; Judg 4:17). Like the tribe of Qedar, Salmah was an Arabian nomadic tribe which inhabited a region in northern Arabia and the region of Petra. The proposed revocalization produces tighter parallelism between Qedar and Salmah, than Qedar and Solomon. This also creates a striking wordplay on the name אול (M. H. Pope, Song of Songs [AB], 320).
- 2 tn The relative pronoun ซ (she) on บุล ซู (she'ani, "because I") functions in a causal sense, as in the following colon (BDB 980 s.v. ซู 3.b) (e.g., Song 5:2; Eccl 2:18).
- 3 tn The relative pronoun שֵׁ (she) איני (sheshshezaf-atni) functions in a causal sense, as in the preceding colon (BDB 980 s.v. שׁ 3.b) (e.g., Song 5:2; Eccl 2:18).
- - 5 tn Heb "the sons of my mother."
- sn The verb הְּדֶּהְ (harah, "to burn in anger, to be angry") creates an interesting wordplay or pun on the preceding line: "The sun burned me (= my skin)." The sun burned her skin, because her brothers had burned (חְבָּה, niharu) in anger against her. This is an example of a polysemantic wordplay which explains the two basic meanings of הַּבְּהְ ("to burn, to be angry") (W. G. E. Watson, Classical Hebrew Poetry [JSOTSup], 241-42).
- 7 sn The noun בּרֶם (kerem, "vineyard") is used figuratively in this line (see following note on the wordplays in this verse). Some suggest that her "vineyard" refers to her virginity, that is, she lost her virginity. However, this runs contrary to the moral purity accorded to the Beloved throughout the Song (e.g., 4:12; 8:8-10). It is better to take the "vineyard" imagery as a reference to her ability to take care of her physical appearance which had been thwarted by being forced to work outside where her skin had been darkened by the scorching rays of the sun, as alluded to throughout 1:4-5[5-6].
- \$ sn The repetition of the noun בֶּרֶב (kerem, "vineyard") and the verb לְּבָּר (riatar, "to keep, maintain") creates a series of eloquent wordplays. The first occurrence of בַּרֶב ("vineyard") and מַרֶּב ("to keep") is literal, the second occurrence of both is figurative (hypocatastasis). Her brothers forced her to work outside in the sun, taking care of the vineyards; as a result, she was not able to take care of her appearance ("my own vineyard I could not keep").

The Shepherd and the Shepherdess

#### The Beloved to Her Lover:

1:7 Tell me, O you whom my heart<sup>9</sup> loves, where do you pasture your sheep? Where do you rest your sheep during the midday heat?
Tell me lest<sup>10</sup> I wander around<sup>11</sup>

9 tn Heb "soul."

10 tn The causal relative pronoun w (she, "because"; BDB 980 s.v. ש 3.b) is prefixed to the interrogative particle לֵמֶה (lamah, "why?"; BDB 554 s.v. מה 4.d) to form the idiom שַּלְמֵּה (shallamah, "lest"; BDB 554 s.v. מָה 4.d.β; 980 s.v. שָ 3b). BDB notes that לְמָה is used with an imperfect – as is the case here with אָהֵיָה ('ehyeh, Qal imperfect 1st person common singular from הַּיָה, haya, "to be") – to deprecate a situation and for rhetorical emphasis to introduce the reason why something should, or should not, be done: "Why should?" (e.g., Gen 27:45; 47:19; Exod 32:12; 1 Sam 19:5, 17; 20:8, 32; 2 Sam 2:22; 13:26; 16:9; 20:19; 2 Kgs 14:10; 2 Chr 25:16; Neh 6:3; Pss 79:10; 115:2; Eccl 5:5; 7:16-17; Jer 40:15; Joel 2:17) (BDB 554 s.v. מָה 4.d.β). When connected with a foregoing sentence by the causal relative pronouns " "because," the idiom שַּלְמָה connotes "lest" (literally, "Because why should?") (BDB 554 s.v. 4.d.β). The meaning of שֵּלְמָה is identical to the parallel constructions אַשֶּׁר לְּמֶה (*asher lammah*, "lest"; Dan 1:10) and די למה (*di lemah*, "lest"; Ezra 7:23). In Song 1:6[7] the causal relative pronoun go connects it to the preceding lines, and our idiom assumes the elided phrase הַנְּיְדֶה לִי (hag-gidah li, "Tell me!") which occurred earlier: "Tell me lest ו ...!" or "Tell me! For why should I ...?"

**11 tn** The meaning of MT עמיָה ('ot<sup>e</sup>yah, Qal active participle fs from עמה, 'atah, "to veil oneself") is debated; several options have been proposed: (1) Some scholars attempt to explain this in light of ancient Israelite culture or customs. The term ממה describes a person wrapping oneself in a garment or with a veil (HALOT 813 s.v. ועמה) as (a) a sign of grief or mourning (Ezek 24:17, 22), uncleanness (Lev 13:45), or shame (Mic 3:7), and as (b) the clothing of the deceased (1 Sam 28:14) and veiled cult-prostitutes (Gen 28:14). The term is rendered "one who veils herself" (NASB), "one who is veiled" (NRSV, KJV margin) and "like a veiled woman" (ASV, NIV). BDB suggests that she veiled herself in mourning (BDB 741 s.v. ו עמה). Rashi suggested that she veiled herself in mourning because she did not know where to find her beloved (Canticles Rabbah 1:6). Many commentators connect this with the veiled cult-prostitute soliciting business among shepherds. She wished to avoid what Tamar tried to do: to be mistaken as a harlot looking for business among the shepherds (Gen 38:14-23). If her beloved would not declare his whereabouts, she would be reduced to looking for him among the shepherds an action that could be easily misunderstood. This is reflected in the CEV paraphrase: "Don't let the other shepherds think badly of me." R. E. Murphy (Song of Songs [Hermeneia], 131) writes: "Commentators have interpreted the covering as a sign of mourning (2 Sam 15:30) or as the sign of a harlot (Gen 38:14-15). These references are not helpful in explaining the context of v 7, and in neither of the instances is the word עמה used. She seems rather to refer to some kind of covering or disguise she will be forced to use unless she knows where to find him. One can infer that the disguise will enable her to avoid being identified by his 'companions,' but no reason is given (perhaps she does not want them to know about the rendezvous?)" (2) Other scholars resort to comparative lexicography. For example, S. R. Driver suggested that עמיה is not derived from עמה ("to veil"), but from the Arabic root gth that came into Hebrew as the homonymic root נֶּמֶה "to pick lice" (Isa 22:17; Jer 43:12) (HALOT 814 s.v. II עמה). Driver renders the line, "lest I be left picking lice," that is, while away the siesta-time grooming herself. Most scholars reject this proposal; it seems strange in the context and unnecessarily creates a homonym for a well-known term that makes adequate sense contextually. Nevertheless, Driver's proposal was adopted by the NEB: "that I may not be left picking lice." See D. R. Driver, "Lice in the Old Testament," PEQ 106 (1974):

beside the flocks of your companions!

#### The Lover to His Beloved:

1:8 If you do not know, O most beautiful of women,

simply follow the tracks of my flock, and pasture your little lambs beside the tents of the shepherds.

The Beautiful Mare and the Fragrant Myrrh

#### The Lover to His Beloved:

1:9 O my beloved, you are like<sup>1</sup> a<sup>2</sup> mare<sup>3</sup> among Pharaoh's stallions.<sup>4</sup>

159-160. (3) Still other scholars emend the text. MT reads בעמיה ( $k^e$ ot $^e$ yah, "like one who is veiled") (preposition  $\Rightarrow$  + Qal active participle fs עַּמָה ו "to veil") which is also reflected in the LXX's ω περιβαλλομένη (ō periballomenē, "like one who is covered"; fs passive participle from περιβάλλω, periballo, "to cover"). However, several ancient versions (Greek: Symmachus, Syriac Peshitta, Vulgate) reflect a Hebrew Vorlage with metathesis of the first two consonants: בָּמֹעֵיָה  $(k^e to' iyyah)$ from מְּעֶה (ta'ah, "to wander about, to stray"; e.g., Ezek 13:10). The root מַעָה would be an Aramaizing form of Hebrew מַעה ("to wander"). This emendation is suggested by the BHS editors and the lexicons (HALOT 377 s.v. מעה; 814; BDB 742 s.v.); It is adopted by many translations: "like one who wanders" (RSV, AV, JB, NAB, NJV), "like one who strays" (JPS, NJPS) and "as one that turneth aside" (KJV). This would make nice sense contextually: she begs her beloved to tell her where to find him because she does not want to wander around like someone who is lost.

1 tn Heb "I compare you to."

2 th The hireq-yod ending or מְּבְתִּי (susati) is a remnant of the old genitive ending (e.g., nominative: malku, genitive: malk, accusative: malka), the so-called hireq compaginis ending. Thus, מְבָּתִי בְּרַבְי בְּרַתָּ וֹ (susati berikve par'oh) is a double genitive-construct: "a mare among the chariot-horses of Pharaoh" (M. H. Pope, Song of Songs [AB], 338) or "a mare among the chariots of Pharaoh" (R. E. Murphy, Song of Songs [Hermeneia], 131). The hireq-yod ending was mistakenly treated as 1st person common singular possessive suffix "my mare" by LXX, Vulgate, Syriac. This approach is mistakenly adopted by several translations: "my mare" (NASB, NJB), "my filly" (NKJV) and "my company of horsemen" (DRA).

<sup>3</sup> sn It was common in ancient love literature to compare a beautiful woman to a sleek filly. For example, Horace likened Lyde to a three year old filly: "She gambols over the spreading plains and shrinks from touch, to wedlock still a stranger, not yet ripe for eager mate" (Horace, Odes iii. xi. 9). Theocritus compared Helen of Troy to a graceful steed harnessed to a chariot: "As towers the cypress mid the garden's bloom, as in the chariot proud Thessalian steed, thus graceful rose-complexion'd Helen moves" (Theocritus, Idyll xviii. 30-31).

4 tn Heb "among the chariot-horses" or "among the chariots." The noun בֶּבֶב (rekhev) has a wide range of meanings: "chariots, war-chariots" (Exod 14:17-18, 23; 15:19; Deut 11:4; 20:1; Josh 11:4) "chariot crews, chariot troops" (1 Kgs 9:22; 16:3; 22:31; 2 kg 8:21), "column of chariots, troop of warriors" (Isa 21:7, 9), "charioteer" (Ps 76:7), and "chariothorses" (Exod 14:9; 2 Sam 8:4; 1 Chr 18:4; Ezek 39:20) (HALOT 1233-35 s.v. רבב). Scholars have struggled with the meaning of בַּרְכָבֵי פַּרְעָה ( $b^e$ rikhbe par'oh, "[harnessed to (?)] Pharaoh's chariot"; HALOT 1234 s.v. 6.b). M. H. Pope (Song of Songs [AB], 338) suggests that רָבֶבֵי (rikhbe) be nuanced "chariot-horses" and the phrase rendered "among the chariot-horses of Pharaoh." Pope offers the best explanation of this enigmatic picture: "A crucial consideration overlooked by commentators is the well-attested fact that Pharaoh's chariots, like other chariotry in antiquity, were not drawn by a mare or mares but by stallions hitched in pairs. This bit of intelligence radically alters the usual understanding of the verse and dispels the notion that there is a grammatical incongruity, which needs harmonizing. The juxtaposition is between 1:10 Your cheeks are beautiful with ornaments;

your neck is lovely<sup>5</sup> with strings of jewels.

1:11 We<sup>6</sup> will make for you gold ornaments

studded with silver.7

#### The Beloved about Her Lover:

1:12 While the king was at his banqueting table, 8

my nard<sup>9</sup> gave forth its fragrance.<sup>10</sup>
1:13 My beloved is like a fragrant pouch of myrrh<sup>11</sup>

a single mare and a plurality of stallions and it requires only a modicum of what is called 'horse sense' to appreciate the thrust of the comparison. The situation envisaged is illustrated by the famous incident in one of the campaigns of Thutmose III against Qadesh. On his tomb at Thebes, the Egyptian soldier Amenemheb relates how the Prince of Qadesh sent forth a swift mare, which entered among the army. But Amenembeb ran after her on foot and with his dagger ripped open her belly, cut off her tail, and presented it to the king, thus preventing a debacle before the excited stallions could take out after the mare."

**5 tn** The phrase "is lovely" does not appear in the Hebrew but is supplied in the translation for the sake of clarity to complete the parallelism with the preceding line.

נֵעֶשׁה The subject of the 1st person common plural verb נַעֶּשׁה (na'aseh) might be the maidens of Jerusalem mentioned in 1:4[5]. However, this might be an example of heterosis of number, that is, the 1st person common plural for 1st person common singular person. In this case, her lover – the speaker throughout the rest of 1:8-9[9-10] – would still be the speaker here. Other possible examples of heterosis of number of the plural for the singular in the Song include 1:3[4]; 2:15; 5:1b; 6:13[7:1].

 ${\bf ^7\,tn}$  Or "We will make gold ornaments with your studs of silver."

א tn The lexicons suggest that בְּחָבֶּי (mesav) refers to a round banquet table (HALOT 604 s.v. בְּחָבֵּי ס divan with cushions (BDB 687 s.v. בְּחָבֵּי בְּ). In Mishnaic Hebrew the noun בְּחָבַּ ר refers to a dining couch, banquet table, as well as cushions or pillows (HALOT 604). The related noun הְּשִּבְּיבָּ (mesibbah) refers to a banqueting party (HALOT 604 s.v. בְּחָבְהַי, Jastrow 803 s.v. בְּחָבְהַי, The versions took it as a reference to a resting place (see LXX, Vulgate, Syriac Peshitta). R. E. Murphy (Song of Songs [Hermeneia], 131) suggests that it refers to (1) a couch or divan on which a person declined while eating, (2) a group of people gathered in a circle, that is, an entourage, or (3) a private place such as an enclosure.

tc The MT בְּּטְבֵּבוֹ (bimsibbo, "his banquet table") is enigmatic: "While the king was at his banquet table, my nard gave forth its fragrance." W. Rudolph suggests emending to בְּּטָבוֹ (mesibbi, "around me"): "While the king surrounded me, my nard gave forth its fragrance" (Des Buch Ruth, das Hohe Lied, die Klagelieder [KAT], 27).

9 sn "Nard" (רְדְי, nerde) was an aromatic oil extracted from the Valerian nardostachys jatamansi which was an aromatic drug from a plant which grew in the Himalaya region of India, used for perfume (HALOT 723 s.ע. בולים). Nard was an expensive imported perfume, worn by women at banquets because of its seductive charms. It was used in the ANE as a love potion because of its erotic fragrance (R. K. Harrison, Healing Herbs of the Bible, 48-49).

10 tn Or "The fragrance of my nard wafted forth."

spending the night<sup>1</sup> between my breasts. 1:14 My beloved is like a cluster of henna blossoms<sup>2</sup> in the vineyards of En-Gedi.<sup>3</sup>

Mutual Praise and Admiration

#### The Lover to His Beloved:

1:15 Oh,<sup>4</sup> how beautiful you are, my beloved!<sup>5</sup>

Oh, how beautiful you are! Your eyes<sup>6</sup> are like doves!<sup>7</sup>

#### The Beloved to Her Lover:

1:16 Oh, how handsome you are, my lover!8 Oh, 9 how delightful 10 you are!

with fat and shaped into cones and as the fat melted from the body heat, the aroma of myrrh and the anointing oil would perfume a woman's body. Because it had a very strong aroma which would last for long periods of time, women often wore it to bed to perfume themselves for the next day. Because of its beautiful fragrance, it is associated with romance (e.g., Isa 3:24) (R. K. Harrison, Healing Herbs of the Bible, 45-46).

**1 tn** Alternately, "resting between my breasts." The verb לִין (lin) has a three-fold range of meaning in the Qal stem: (1) "to leave overnight," e.g., meat or corpse on a tree, (2) "to spend the night, stay overnight," and (3) "to stay, dwell" (HALOT 529 s.v. ליין). The myrrh motif (see study note above) suggests the nuance "to spend the night" (HALOT 529 s.v. 2). This is also the most appropriate nuance of its usage in Song 7:12 (e.g., Gen 19:2; 24:23, 25, 54; 28:11; 31:54; 32:14, 22; Num 22:8; Josh 3:1; 4:3; 6:11; 8:9; Judg 18:2; 19:4-15 (9x), 20; 20:4; 2 Sam 12:16; 17:8, 16; 19:8; 1 Kgs 19:9; Isa 21:13; 65:4; Jer 14:8; Joel 1:13; Zeph 2:14; Pss 25:13; 55:8; Job 24:7; 31:32; 39:9; Prov 19:23; Song 7:12; Ruth 1:16; 3:13; Neh 4:16; 13:20; 1 Chr 9:27). Several translations follow course: "he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts" (KJV) and "which lies all night between my breasts" (NASB). Others downplay the obvious sexual connotations: "resting between my breasts" (NIV) and "lodged between my breasts" (NJPS). The imperfect has been taken in two basic senses: (1) future time action: "he shall spend the night between my breasts" and (2) present characteristic or present progressive: "he spends the night between my breasts." The latter is favored by the characteristic/progressive nature of the metaphors used through 1:12-13[13-14].

2 sn The henna plant (בֶּבֶּר, "henna"; HALOT 495 s.v. (בַּבֶּר) is an inflorescent shrub with upward pointing blossoms, that have sweet smelling whitish flowers that grow in thick clusters (Song 4:13; 7:12). Like myrrh, the henna plant was used to make sweet smelling perfume. Its flowers were used to dye hair, nails, fingers, and toes orange.

3 sn En-Gedi is a lush oasis in the midst of the desert wilderness on the southwestern shore of the Dead Sea. The surrounding region is hot and bleak; its dry sands extend monotonously for miles. The Dead Sea region is a salty desert covered with a dusty haze and characterized by almost unbearable heat during most of the year. The lush oasis of En-Gedi is the only sign of greenery or life for miles around. It stands out as a surprising contrast to the bleak, dry desert wilderness around it. In the midst of this bleak desert wilderness is the lush oasis in which indescribable beauty is found. The lush oasis and waterfall brings welcome relief and refreshment to the weary desert traveler.

לא sn His praise begins with the exclamatory particle הָּנָה (hinneh, "behold!"). This is often used to introduce a statement in which the speaker either newly asserts or newly recognizes something (BDB 2445 א. הַנָּר b.a).

\$ sn The term יַבְּיֶרָת (ra/yait, "my darling") is from אָבַי (re'a) "companion, friend" in general (e.g., Job 2:11; 6:27; 12:4; Pss 35:14; 122:8; Prov 14:20; 17:17; 19:6; 27:10) and "darling, beloved" in romantic relationships (e.g., Job 30:29; Jer 3:1, 20; Hos 3:1; Song 5:1, 16) (HALOT 1253-54 s.v. וו אֶבֶי, BDB 945 s.v. וו בְּיֶבֶר ווֹ.1). This is the most common term of affection to address the Beloved (Song 1:9, 15; 2:2, 10, 13; 4:1, 7:5:2: 6:4).

6 sn In the ancient Near East there was an unusual emphasis on beauty of a woman's eyes. This was probably due to the practice of women veiling themselves and wearing long robes so that no portion of their body or face was exposed to sight except for their eyes (e.g., Gen 26:17). The only indication of a woman's beauty was her eyes. There was no better (and no other, in light of the attire) way to praise a woman's beauty in the ancient Near East (G. L. Carr, Song of Solomon [TOTC], 86).

7 th Heb "Your eyes are doves." This metaphor compares her eyes to doves. There is no lack of suggestions as to the point of the comparison: (1) Arabic love literature describes doves having sentimental eyes, the point here (Marcia Falk, Love Lyrics from the Bible, 11.3). (2) The comparison has to do with the color of her eyes (G. L. Carr, Song of Solomon [TOTC], 86). (3) The comparison has to do with the glistening color of the dove and its quick movements, that is, her eyes had a beautiful color and had lively motion (M. H. Pope, Song of Songs [AB], 356). (4) The comparison has to do with the fluttering of her eyes which reminded him of the fluttering of a dove's wings (M. D. Goulder, The Song of Fourteen Songs [JSOTSup], 5). (5) The comparison has to do with gentleness and purity, as well as longing and simplicity (K&D 18:38).

8 sn The statement הַּגְרַ יְפָּה רַשְּׁיִתְּל (hinnakh yafah ra'yati, "How beautiful you are, my darling") in 1:15 is virtually mirrored by the Beloved's statement in 1:16, יְדָּלְ הִיְּפָּה רוֹרְה וֹיִלְּהְ יְפָּה רוֹרְה 'How handsome you are, my lover").

9 tn The term אָר ('af, "how") is used to: (1) introduce additional information; (2) to emphasize a point; (3) to enhance a statement; (4) to create an antithesis (HALOT 76 s.v. אָר). The usage here is to enhance "how pleasant" or "certainly pleasant" (HALOT 76). The particle and is often used in Hebrew poetry to emphatically introduce a thought in the second colon which is a step beyond what was asserted in the first colon (e.g., Deut 33:3, 20, 28; 1 Sam 2:7; Pss 16:6, 7, 9; 18:49 HT [18:48 ET]; 65:14 HT [65:13 ET]; 68:9, 17 HT [68:8, 16 ET]; 74:16; 89:28 HT [89:27 ET]; 93:1; Prov 22:19; 23:28) (BDB 64 s.v. b.1). Sometimes, אָד is used to introduce a surprise or something unexpected (e.g., Job 14:3; 15:4) (BDB 65 s.v. a.1). The particle אָר ("Oh!"), which introduces this line, is often used in Hebrew poetry to emphatically introduce a new thought and indicates that this is an addition to the previous statement; it is something far greater.

10 th The term אָנֶים (na'im, "pleasant, delightful") can refer to physical attractiveness or to personal character (BDB 653 בבין, HALOT 705 s.v. ו ביים). Some suggest that it refers to the pleasantness of his character and personality; however, it is better to take this as a reference to his handsome physical appearance for several reasons: (1) The terms ביים (vafeh, "handsome") and ביים ('delightful") are probably used in synonymous rather than synthetic parallelism. (2) The emphasis in 1:15-16 is on physical beauty as the repetition of the term "beautiful, handsome" (ביים "שָּבָּין (na'amte", "to be delightful") is used in Song 7:7 in synonymous parallelism with ביים (vafat, "to be beautiful") in the description of the Beloved's physical beauty. (4) Hebrew lexicographers classify this usage of ביים in Song 1:16 in terms of physical beauty rather than personal character (BDB 653 s.v. 2).

THE SONG OF SONGS 1:17

The lush foliage1 is our canopied bed;2 1:17 the cedars are the beams of our bedroom chamber:

the pines are the rafters of our bedroom.

The Lily among the Thorns and the Apple Tree in the Forest

#### The Beloved to Her Lover:

2:1 I am a3 meadow flower4 from Sharon,5 a lily<sup>6</sup> from the valleys.

- **1 tn** The term רְעַנָנָה (ra'ananah, "lush, verdant") refers to the color "green" and is often used in reference to luxuriant foliage or trees (Pss 37:35; 52:8; Jer 11:16; Hos 14:8). The impression 1:16c-17 gives is that the young man and young woman are lying down together on the grass in the woods enjoying the delights of their caresses. They liken the grass below and the green leaves above to a marriage couch or canopied bed.
- 2 tn Or "The lush foliage is our marriage couch." The term ערש ('eres. "bed") describes a canopied bed (Pss 6:7: 41:4: 132:2; Prov 7:16) or marriage couch (Song 1:16) (BDB 793 s.v. ערש).
- 3 tn Or "the rose of Sharon...the lily of the valleys." There is debate whether the expressions הַבַּצֵּלֶת הַשָּׁרוֹן (khavatselet hashsharon) and שושַנת הָעָמָקים (shoshannat ha'amaqim) are definite ("the rose of Sharon...the lily of the valleys") or indefinite ("a rose of Sharon...a lily"). Some translations adopt the definite sense (KJV, NKJV, NASB, NAU, NJB, NLT); others the indefinite sense (ASV, RSV, NRSV, NIV, NIB, NAB, NJPS, CEV).
- 4 tn Heb "meadow-saffron" or "crocus." The noun הַבַּצֵלַת (khavatselet) traditionally has been translated "rose" (KJV, NKJV, ASV, NASB, RSV, NRSV, NIV, NJPS, NLT, CEV); however, recent translations suggest "crocus" (NIV margin, NJPS margin), "narcissus" (DBY) or simply "flower" (DRA, NAB). The LXX translated it with the generic term ἀνθος (anthos, "flower, blossom"). Early English translators knew that it referred to some kind of flower but were unsure exactly which type, so they arbitrarily chose "rose" because it was a well-known and beautiful flower. In the light of comparative Semitics, modern Hebrew lexicographers have settled on "asphodel," "meadow-saffron," "narcissus," or "crocus" (BDB 287 s.v. הַבַּצֵלַת; HALOT 287 s.v. חבצלת; DCH 3:153 s.v. חבצלת). The Hebrew term is related to Syriac hamsalaita ("meadow saffron") and Akkadian habasillatu ("flower-stalk, marsh plant, reed"). Lexicographers and botanists suggest that the Hebrew term refers to Ashodelos (lily family), Narcissus tazetta (narcissus or daffodil), or Colchicum autumnale (meadow-saffron or crocus). The location of this flower in Sharon suggests that a common wild flower would be more consonant than a rose. The term appears elsewhere only in Isa 35:1 where it refers to some kind of desert flower - erroneously translated "rose" (KJV, NJPS) but probably "crocus" (NASB, NIV, NJPS margin). Appropriately, the rustic maiden who grew up in the simplicity of rural life compares herself to a simple, common flower of the field (M. H. Pope, Song of Songs [AB], 367).
- 5 sn Sharon is a low coastal plain stretching south from Mount Carmel. It is well watered due to the Kurkar ridges running parallel to the shore which trapped the water run-off from the Samaritan hills. The combination of low sandy hills and swampy lowlands produced heavy vegetation and an abundance of wild flowers in the area (M. H. Pope, Song of Songs [AB], 367).
- 6 tn There is debate about the referent of שושנת (shoshannat, "lily") because there are many different species of the lily family. Botanists note that among the many different species of the lily family only one grows in Palestine. This species may be identified as the Anthemis palaestina, the chamomile, a white-daisy-like plant, which was indigenous to Palestine (Fauna and Flora of the Bible, 134-36).

#### The Lover to His Beloved:

1232

2:2 Like<sup>7</sup> a lily among the thorns,<sup>8</sup> so is my darling among the maidens.

# The Beloved about Her Lover:

- 2:3 Like<sup>9</sup> an apple tree<sup>10</sup> among the trees of the forest,
- so is my beloved among the young men.

- 7 sn This is an example of emblematic parallelism. An illustrative simile appears in the A-line and the subject of the comparison is in the B-line. The particles  $z_{...} = (c^e ... ken.$  "like...so") form an emphatic comparative construction (e.g., Ps 123:2), see IBHS 641-42 §38.5a.
- **8 tn** Alternately, "thorn bushes." The term הַהוֹהִים (hahokhim) is probably derived from min (khokh, "thorn-bush, briars, thistles, thorns"; HALOT 296 s.v. תוֹה, BDB 296 s.v. הוֹה, rather than min (khokh, "crevice"; HALOT 296 s.v. II min): "Like a lily among the thorns" rather than "Like a lily among the rock crevices." The picture is of a beautiful flower growing in the midst of thorn bushes (1 Sam 14:11; 2 Kgs 14:9; 2 Chr 25:18; Job 31:40; Prov 26:9; Isa 34:13; Hos 9:6) rather than a beautiful flower growing in the midst of rocky outcroppings (1 Sam 13:6; 2 Chr 33:11). The Hebrew term is related to Akkadian hahu and haiahu "thorn" and hahinnu "thorny plants" (AHw 1:308) and Aramaic hahhu (HALOT 296). The "thorn bush" is a thistle plant (Poterium spinosum) which has prickly spines covered with thistles, but also sprouts beautiful small red flowers (Fauna and Flora of the Bible, 184-85).
- sn The Lover accommodates her self-denigrating comparison, but heightens it to praise her: If she insisted that she was nothing more than a common flower of the field, then he insisted that all other women were like thorns by comparison. The term rin (khokh, "thorn") is often used as a figure for utter desolation and the cause of pain; it is the antithesis of fertility and beautiful luxuriant growth (Job 31:40; Isa 34:13; Hos 9:6).
- <sup>9</sup> tn Like the preceding line, this is a case of emblematic parallelism. An illustrative simile appears in the A-line (object of the comparison) and the subject of comparison appears in the B-line. The particles 5...5 ( $k^e...ken$ . "like...so") form an emphatic comparative construction (e.g., Ps 123:2); cf. IBHS 641-42 §38.5a.
- 10 sn Apple trees were not native to Palestine and had to be imported and cultivated. To find a cultivated apple tree growing in the forest among other wild trees would be quite unusual; the apple tree would stand out and be a delightful surprise. Like a cultivated apple tree, the Lover was unique and stood out among all other men. In ancient Near Eastern love literature, the apple tree was a common symbol for romantic love and sexual fertility (S. N. Kramer, The Sacred Marriage Rite, 100-101). The "apple tree" motif is used in the Song in a similar manner (e.g., Song 2:3; 8:5). Likewise, the motif of "apples" is used as a symbol of fertility (Joel 1:12) and sexual desire (Song 2:5, 7, 9).

I delight to sit in his shade,3 fruit4 is

my

1 tn Alternately, "I desired" or "I took delight in." The meaning of this use of the verb קמר (khamad, "delight, desire") is debated. The root has a basic two-fold range of meanings: (1) "to take pleasure in, delight in" (Job 20:20; Pss 39:12; 68:17; Prov 1:22; Isa 1:29; 44:9; 53:2) and (2) "to desire passionately, to desire illicitly" (Exod 20:17; 34:24; Deut 5:21; 7:25; Josh 7:21; Prov 1:22; 6:25; 12:12; Mic 2:2) (HALOT 325 s.v. חמר; BDB 326 s.v. חמרה). The related noun חמרה (khemekhah) describes objects which are "delightful, precious, desirable" (HALOT 325 s.v. המדה). Commentators who adopt an erotic view of the extended metaphor in 2:3 opt for the sexual desire nuance: "I desired (sexually)." Those who adopt the less erotic approach favor the more general connotation: "I took delight in" or "I delight in."

2 tn Heb "I delighted and I sat down." Alternately, "I sat down with delight...." The verbs המרתי (khimmadti veyashavti, "I delighted and I sat down") form a verbal hendiadys (GKC 386 §120.d): "I sat down with delight..." or "I delight to sit...." The sequence of a perfect followed by another perfect with vav conjunctive creates the coordination of the complementary verbal idea (first verb) with the idea of the main (second) verb. The main idea is indicated by the second verb; the first verb indicates the manner of action. The first verb functions adverbially while the second verb carries its full verbal sense (see IBHS 653-54 §39.2.5).

3 sn The term צל (tsel, "shade") is used figuratively to depict protection and relief. This term is used in OT literally (physical shade from the sun) and figuratively (protection from something) (HALOT 1024-25 s.v. צֶל'): (1) Literal: The physical shade of a tree offers protection from the heat of the midday sun (Judg 9:15; Ezek 17:23; 31:6, 12, 17; Hos 4:13; Jonah 4:6; Job 7:2; 40:22). Similar protection from the sun is offered by the shade of a vine (Ps 80:11), root (Gen 19:8), mountain (Judg 9:36), rock (Isa 32:2), cloud (Isa 25:5), and hut (Jonah 4:5). (2) Figurative (hypocatastasis): Just as physical shade offers protection from the sun, the Israelite could find "shade" (protection) from God or the king (e.g., Num 14:9; Isa 30:2; 49:2; 51:16; Hos 14:8; Pss 17:8; 36:8; 57:2; 63:8; 91:1; 121:5; Lam 4:20: Eccl 7:12). The association between "shade" and "protection" is seen in the related Akkadian sillu "shade, covering, protection" (AHw 3:1101; CAD S:189). The epithets of several Akkadian deities are sillu and sululu ("Shade, Protector"). The motif of protection, rest, and relief from the sun seems to be implied by the expression וַיִּשֶּׁבְתִּי (veyashavti, "I sat down") in 2:3b. During the summer months, the temperature often reaches 110-130°F in the Negev. Those who have never personally experienced the heat of the summer sun in the Negev as they performed strenuous physical labor cannot fully appreciate the relief offered by any kind of shade! Previously, the young woman had complained that she had been burned by the sun because she had been forced to labor in the vineyards with no shade to protect her (Song 1:5-6). She had urged him to tell her where she could find relief from the sun during the hot midday hours (Song 1:7). Now she exults that she finally had found relief from the scorching sun under the "shade" which he offered to her (Song 2:3). S. C. Glickman writes: "Whereas before she came to him she worked long hours on the sun (1:6), now she rests under the protective shade he brings. And although formerly she was so exhausted by her work she could not properly care for herself, now she finds time for refreshment with him" (A Song for Lovers, 40).

**4 sn** The term פַּרִיוּ (piryo, "his fruit") is a figure for the young man himself or perhaps his kisses which the young woman delights to "taste" (e.g., Song 4:11; 5:13). It is possible to take the imagery of the young woman tasting his "fruit" as kissing. Likewise, the imagery of the gazelles grazing among the lilies is probably a picture of the young man caressing and kissing his beloved (Song 2:16; 6:3).

5 sn The term מתוק (matog, "sweet") is used literally and figuratively. When used literally, it describes pleasant tasting foods, such as honey (Judg 14:14, 18; Prov 24:13; Ps 19:11) or sweet water (Num 33:28; Prov 9:17). Used figuratively, it describes what is pleasant to experience: friendship (Job 20:12; Ps 55:15; Prov 27:9), life (Eccl 11:7; Sir 40:18), sleep taste.6

The Banquet Hall for the Love-Sick

#### The Beloved about Her Lover:

2:4 He brought me<sup>7</sup> into the banquet hall,<sup>8</sup>

for the weary (Eccl 5:11), eloquence in speech (Prov 16:21, 24), and scripture (Ps 19:11). Those who adopt the "hypererotic" approach opt for the literal meaning: his "fruit" tastes sweet to her palate. The nonerotic approach takes the term in its figurative sense: The experience of his love was pleasant.

6 tn Heb "my palate." The term הבי (khikki, "my palate") is used metonymically in reference to the sensation of taste which is associated with a person's palate. The idea of "tasting" is used as a metaphor in the OT for the experiential knowledge which is acquired through a person's relationship with someone (e.g., Ps 34:9). Just as a person would learn whether a fruit was ripe and delicious by tasting it, so a person could learn of the quality of a person's character by experiencing it through personal interaction. This extended metaphor compares the delights of his love to (1) the refreshment of sitting in the shade of a tree for refuge from the desert sun, and (2) the delight of tasting a sweet apple - a fruit that was not indigenous to Palestine.

7 tc The MT vocalizes consonantal הביאני as הביאני (hevi'ani, Hiphil perfect 3rd person masculine singular with 1st person common singular suffix, "He has brought me"). However, several medieval Hebrew MSS vocalize the form as הביאני (havi'uni, Hiphil imperative 2nd person masculine singular with 1st person common singular suffix, "Bring me!"). This is also reflected in LXX (εἰσαγαγετε με, eisagagete me, "Bring me!") and Syriac. This alternate vocalization tradition has several factors that make it a viable option: (1) It respects the consonantal text; (2) It is supported by the LXX and Syriac; (3) It provides a tighter parallelism with the two identical imperatival forms in 2:5a (both 2nd person masculine plural imperatives with 1st person common singular suffixes); (4) It provides thematic unity to the entire poetic unit of 2:4-5; and (5) It helps make better sense of an enigmatic unit. This approach is strengthened if the MT reading ודגלו (vediglo, "and his banner") is revocalized to the imperative וְדָנְלֹי ( $v^e diglu$ , "and feed [me]") (see translator's note below). In this case, the parallelism throughout 2:4-5 would be very tight. It would feature four parallel imperatives of request, all revolving around the theme of love-sickness: "Bring me into the banquet hall, feed me with love; sustain me with raisin cakes, refresh me with apples, because I am faint with love." The weakness with the revocalization to הביאני ("Bring me!") is that it demands, due to the dictates of synonymous parallelism, the questionable revocalization of the MT's וְדְגַלוֹ ("and his banner") to the imperative ודגלו ("and feed [me]").

tn Alternately, "Bring me!"

8 tn Heb "house of wine." The expression בֵּית הַיָּיָן (bet hayyayin, lit. "house of wine" or "place of wine") refers to a banquet house where wine is drunk or a vineyard where grapes to produce wine are grown (HALOT 409 s.v. ייין). G. L. Carr favors the vineyard view due to the agricultural metaphors in 2:1-5. However, most commentators favor the banquet house view because of the reference to "raisin-cakes" and "apples" (2:4) which were served at banquets in the ancient Near East. Moreover, the expression בֵּית הַנֵּין in in Song 2:4 may be equivalent to בית משתה היין (bet mishte hayyayin, "house of the drinking of wine") in Esther 7:8 (HALOT 409 s.v. ייין). Second, raisin cakes are mentioned in this context in 2:5, and they were often eaten to celebrate festive occasions (2 Sam 6:19; Isa 16:7; Hos 3:1); therefore, the banquet motif finds support. Selected Bibliography: E. Würthwein, "Zum Verständnis des Hohenliedes," TRu 32 (1967): 205; G. L. Carr, Song of Solomon [TOTC], 90-91.

and he looked1 at me lovingly.2

2:5 Sustain<sup>3</sup> me with raisin cakes,<sup>4</sup> refresh me with apples,<sup>5</sup> for I am faint with love.<sup>6</sup>

The Double Refrain: Embracing and Adjuration

# 2:6 His left hand caresses my head,7

3 tn The imperatives מְּמְבְּרוֹנְי (samme'khuni, "sustain me") and רְּבְּרוֹנִי (rappe'duni, "revive me") are both plural in address (Piel 2nd person masculine plural imperatives with 1st person common singular suffixes). Thus, some commentators suggest that the woman is speaking to a large audience, perhaps the banquet guests implied in 2:4 or the maidens mentioned in 2:7 (R. Gordis, Song of Songs and Lamentations, 82). However, the Hebrew plural can be used in reference to a single individual when functioning in an intensive sense (IBHS 122 §7.4.3a). Thus, the woman may be speaking to her beloved, as in the rest of 2:3-6, but with intense passion. Similarly, in Sumerian love literature the bride sometimes uses plural verbs in reference to herself or her bridegroom (S. N. Kramer, The Sacred Marriage Rite, 92, 99).

אַשישׁרשׁר. 'rashishah' refers to an expensive delicacy made of dried compressed grapes (HALOT 95 s.v. אַשׁרשׁר. BDB 84 s.v. מַשְּׁשִׁרְשׁר. Sashishah) refers to an expensive delicacy made of dried compressed grapes (HALOT 95 s.v. אַשִּרְשׁר. BDB 84 s.v. אַשִּרְשׁר. Bastrow 128 s.v. אַשִּׁרִשְׁר. Raisin cakes were used as cultic offerings by many ancient Near Easterners, and were especially prominent in ancient Near Eastern fertility rites (e.g., Isa 16.7; Hos 3:1). In ancient Israel they were eaten during festive celebrations, being viewed as enhancing sexual fertility (2 Sam 6:19; 1 Chr 16:3). Scholars regard the "raisin cakes" as (1) literal food viewed as an aphrodisiac to "cure" her love-sickness; (2) a figurative expression (hypocatastasis) for sexual passion or lovemaking; or (3) double entendre referring to the literal food as an aphrodisiac and her desire for lovemaking.

**5 tn** Or "apricots." The term תַּפּוּחִים (tappukhim, "apples, from הַפוּה, tappukha) occurs four times in the book (Song 2:3, 5; 7:9; 8:5) and twice outside (Prov 25:4; Joel 1:12). It is usually defined as "apples" (BDB 656 s.v. תַּפוּחָ); however, some argue for "apricots" (FFB 92-93). The Hebrew noun תַּפוּת ("apple") is derived from the Hebrew root נָבָּה (nafakh, "scent, breath") which is related to the Arabic root nafahu "fragrant scent" (HALOT 708 s.v. נפח). Hence, the term refers to a fruit with a fragrant scent. This may explain why the mere scent of this fruit was thought to have medicinal powers in the ancient Near East (G. E. Post, Flora of Syria, Palestine and Sinai, 128). This imagery draws upon two motifs associated with apples. First, apples were viewed as medicinal in ancient Syro-Palestinian customs; the sick were given apples to eat or smell in order to revive them. Similarly, the Mishnah and Talmud refer to apples as a medication like wine and grapes. Second, apples were considered an aphrodisiac in the ancient Near East. Both motifs are combined here because the Beloved is "love-sick" and only the embrace of her beloved can cure her, as 2:6 indicates (T. H. Ratzaby, "A Motif in Hebrew Love Po-

etry: In Praise of the Apple," Ariel 40 [1976]: 14).

6 tn Heb "sick of love." The expression קּבָּה (kholat 'ahavah, "sick of love") is an example of the causative use of the genitive construct: "I am sick because of love," that is, "I am love-sick." The expression הוֹלֶת מְּוֹבֶה (kholat 'ahavah. "faint with love") is a figure which compares physical or medical illness caused by a physically draining disease to sexual desire which is so intense that a person is so physically drained that they feel as if they could faint. The term הול (khol, "sick") refers to the physical weakness which consumes a person who is suffering from a medical illness (Gen 48:1; 1 Sam 19:14). It is used figuratively as a hyperbolic hypocatastasis for being so consumed with sexual desire that it saps one of his/her physical and emotional strength (BDB 317 s.v. 2). This is commonly referred to as "love-sickness." It was associated with such deep longing for physical and sexual fulfillment that it weighed so heavily upon a person that he/she was physically and emotionally drained (2 Sam 13:2).

7 tn Heb "His left hand is under my head." Ultimately, the only cure for her love-sickness is the caress of her beloved.

**1 tc** The MT vocalizes דגלי as the noun דְּלֶל ( $d^e$ gel) with 3rd person masculine singular suffix דְּלֵל (diglo, "his banner [over me is love]"). However, several medieval Hebrew Mss vocalize דער as Qal mp imperative אַרָל ( $v^e$ dihlu, "Set [love before me].") This is also reflected in LXX דάξατε ἐπ' ἐμὲ ἀγάπην (taxate ep eme agapēn, "Set love before me!").

tn The meaning of the term דגלו (diglo) is debated. Five basic views have emerged: (1) "his banner over me was love." BDB relates דְּבֶּלוֹ to the noun דְּבֶּל ( $d^e gel$ , "standard, banner"; BDB 186 s.v. שאוא (דְּבֶל which refers to (a) banners, standards (Num 1:52; 2:2) and (b) battalion, company of troops, or division of a tribe signaled by a banner or standard (Num 2:3, 10, 17-18, 25, 31, 34; 10:14, 18, 22, 25). Thus, most translations render דְּגַלוֹ as "his banner" (KJV, NASB, NIV, NJPS). However, the expression "His banner over me was love" is enigmatic. (2) "serve love to me!" Delitzsch revocalized the noun ("his banner") as an imperative וְדְגָלוֹ (vediglu, "serve [me]") from the root דגל (dagal, "to serve food") which is related to Akkadian dagalu II ("to serve food"). Delitzsch renders the passage: "Bring me into the banquet hall and serve me love...for I am faint with love." This is supported by LXX which reads: εἰσαγάγετέ με εἰς οἶκον τοῦ οἶνου, τάξατε ἐπ' ἐμὲ ἀγάπην (eisagagete me eis oikon tou oinou, taxate ep' eme agapen, "Bring me into the wine house, and set love before me"). However, R. Gordis points out the difficulties with Delitzsch's proposal: (a) The meaning "serve" for דַּגַל is unparalleled in Hebrew thus, it would create a homonymic hapax legomenon; (b) We would expect the preposition לֹּי (li, "to me") rather than עלי ('ala, "over me") after the imperative; and (c) The Akkadian parallel is uncertain. (3) "its banner above me is love." HALOT relates דָּגָלוֹ to the Akkadian noun diglu ("eyesight, view, look, gaze") and proposes the nuance "sign of an inn," such as a flag placed over taverns (HALOT 213 s.v. דגל). This approach renders the line: "He has brought me to the banquet hall, and its banner above me is love." (4) "his look toward me was loving" = "he looked at me lovingly." Several lexicons relate דְּגַלוֹ to the homonymic root דָּגַל, "look, glance" (e.g., DCH 2:415 s.v. ודגל The Hebrew noun degel II is related to the Akkadian noun diglu "eyesight, view, look, gaze" (CAD 3:21; AHw 1:14). Likewise, the Hebrew verb II דגל ("to look, behold"; Song 5:10; 6:4, 10; Eccl 9:13; Ps 20:6) (BDB 186 s.v. דגל; HALOT 213 s.v. I דגל; DCH 2:414 s.v. I) is related to the Akkadian verb dagalu I "to look upon, to gaze, to look with astonishment, to look at with admiration" (CAD 3:21; AHw 1:14). Those who adopt this approach render the line: "His glance upon me is love" (DCH 2:414) or "His look upon me was loving" (R. Gordis, "The Root dgl in the Song of Songs," JBL 88 [1969]: 203-204; idem, Song of Songs and Lamentations, 81-82); or "He looked upon me with love." (5) "his wish regarding me was lovemaking." M. H. Pope (Song of Songs [AB], 376-77) notes that the Assyrian noun diglu may denote "wish," i.e., desire or intent (CAD 3:136). He renders the line: "His wish regarding me was lovemaking" or "His intentions were to make love." Pope's suggestion has been adopted by several recent commentators (e.g., G. L. Carr, Song of Solomon [TOTC], 91).

2 tn The syntax of the noun אַהְבֶּה (ahavah, "love") has been taken as: (1) predicate nominative: "His banner over me [was] love" or "His intention toward me [was] lovemaking" (M. H. Pope, Song of Songs [AB], 376-77; G. L. Carr, Song of Solomon [TOTC], 91); (2) genitive of attribute/content: "His banner of love [was] over me," and (3) adverbial or adjectival accusative: "His look upon me was loving" or "He looked upon me lovingly" (R. Gordis, Song of Songs and Lamentations, 81-82). Examples of adverbial or adjectival accusatives, e.g., "I am peace" = "I am peaceful" (Ps 120:7); "I will love them as a free gift" = "I will love them freely" (Hos 14:5).

and his right hand stimulates me.<sup>1</sup> *The Beloved to the Maidens:* 

2:7 I adjure you, O maidens of Jerusalem, by the gazelles and by the young does of the open fields:

The ancient Near Eastern love songs frequently portray the embrace of the lover as the only cure for the speaker's love-sickness. For example, one Egyptian love song reads: "She will make the doctors unnecessary, because she knows my sickness" (Papyrus Harris 4:11). Similarly, "My salvation is her coming in from outside; when I see her, I will be healthy. When she opens her eye, my body is young, when she speaks, I will be strong. When I embrace her, she exorcises evil from me" (Papyrus Chester Beatty, C5:1-2).

1 tn Heb "embraces." Alternately, "May his left hand be under my head, and [may] his right hand embrace me." The verb הָבֶק (khavaq) has a two-fold range of meanings in the Piel stem: (1) to embrace or hug someone (Gen 29:13; 33:4; 48:10; Job 24:8; Prov 4:8; Eccl 3:5; Lam 4:5) and (2) to fondle or sexually stimulate a lover (Prov 5:20; Song 2:6; 8:3) (HALOT 287 s.v. חבק; BDB 287 s.v. חבק). The verb designates an expression of love by the position or action of one's hands (TWOT 1:259). The term is probably used here as a euphemism. The function of the prefixed verbal form of הַחַבֶּקני (tekhabbeqeni, "embrace me") may be classified several ways: (1) ingressive: "His right hand is beginning to stimulate me," (2) instantaneous: "His right hand is stimulating me [right now]," (3) progressive: "His right hand stimulates me," (4) jussive of desire: "May his right hand stimulate me!" (5) injunction: "Let his right hand stimulate me!" or (6) permission: "His right hand may stimulate me." Based upon their view that the couple is not yet married, some scholars argue for an imperfect of desire ("May his right hand stimulate/embrace me!"). Other scholars suggest that the progressive imperfect is used ("His right hand stimulates me"). For a striking parallel, see S. N. Kramer, The Sacred Marriage Rite, 105.

2 sn Frequently, when oaths were taken in the ancient world, witnesses were invoked in order to solemnize the vow and to act as jurists should the oath someday be broken. Cosmic forces such as the "heavens and earth" were often personified to act as witnesses to an oath (e.g., Deut 32:1; Isa 1:2; Mic 1:2; 6:1-2; Ps 50:2). In this case, the "witnesses" are the "gazelles and stags of the field" (2:7; 3:5). These animals were frequently used as symbols of romantic love in the OT (Prov 5:19). And in Egyptian and Mesopotamian love literature and Ugaritic poetry the gazelle was often associated with sexual fertility. For instance, in the following excerpt from a Mesopotamian incantation text the stag is referred to in the context of sexual potency in which a woman urges an ailing male: "With the love-[making of the mountain goat] six times, with the lovemaking of a stag seven times, with the lovemaking of a partridge twelve times, make love to me! Make love to me because I am young! And the lovemaking of a stag...Make love to me!" (R. D. Biggs, Ancient Mesopotamian Potency Incantations [TCS], 26, lines 4-8).

3 tn Traditionally, "hinds." A hind is a female deer, generally less than three years old.

4 tn Heb "of the field." The Hebrew term refers to open fields or open country as the home of wild animals; if taken adjectivally this could modify the previous term: "wild young does" (cf. NRSV).

**sn** The "gazelles" and "does of the fields" are probably zoomorphisms for love personified. In other words, the witness of this oath is "love" itself. Should the daughters violate this vow which they are asked to make, "love" itself would hold them accountable. Gazelles were often figures in Hebrew, Akkadian, and Ugaritic literature for mighty warriors or virile young men (e.g., 2 Sam 1:19; 2:18; Isa 14:9; Zech 10:3).

Do not awaken or arouse<sup>5</sup> love<sup>6</sup> until it pleases!<sup>7</sup>

 $^{\bf 5}$  tn Alternately, "arouse...awaken...." The root ") ('ur) is repeated twice in 2:7 for rhetorical emphasis. The first is the Hiphil imperative ("do not awake/excite...") and the second is the Polel imperative ("do not awake/start to move..."). The Hiphil depicts a causative action (causing love to initially awaken) and the Polel depicts an intensive action (repeated efforts to awaken love or to set love into motion). On the other hand, G. L. Carr (Song of Solomon [TOTC], 94) writes: "The meaning is not stir up, i.e., a repetition of the same act, but is rather first the act of awakening or summoning something, and then doing what is necessary to sustain the activity already begun, i.e., being so fully awakened that sleep becomes impossible (e.g., 5:2)." The terms תְּנֵירו (ta'iru, "arouse"; Hiphil imperative from תנור and העוררו ( $t^{e'}$ or $^{e}$ ru, "awaken"; Polel imperative from עור) are probably figurative expressions (hypocatastasis) rather than literal, because the object does not refer to a person (her lover) but to an emotional state ("love"). The Hebrew root שור has two basic meanings: (1) to wake up and (2) to excite (HALOT 802 s.v. II שור). These two nuances are paralleled in the related Semitic roots: Ugaritic `r and `rr "to be excited" (UT 19.1849; 19.1926; WUS 2092) and Akkadian eru "to awake" (AHw 1:247) (HALOT 802 s.v. II). The Hiphil stem has a four-fold range of meanings: (1) to wake up someone/ something, (2) to excite, put into motion, start to work, (3) to summons, (4) to disturb (HALOT 802-803 s.v. II). When used literally, the Hiphil describes waking up a sleeper (Zech 4:1) or stirring up a fire (Hos 7:4). When used figuratively, it describes stirring up (Isa 50:4; Pss 57:9; 108:3) strength (Dan 11:25), anger/wrath (Ps 78:38), jealous/zeal (Isa 42:13), and love/ sexual passion (Song 2:7; 3:5; 8:4). The Polel stem has a three-fold range of meanings: (1) to awake, start to move, (2) to agitate, disturb, (3) to set in motion (HALOT 802-803 s.v. II). The expression "arouse or awaken love" is figurative (hypocatastasis). It draws an implied comparison between the literal action of arousing a person from sleep and stirring him/her up to excited action, with the figurative picture of a lover sexually stirring up, arousing and exciting the sexual passions of his beloved.

sn What does the expression to "arouse or awaken love" mean? There are three major views: (1) to force a love relationship to develop prematurely rather than to allow it to develop naturally; (2) to interfere with the experience of passionate love; or (3) to stir up sexual passion, that is, to become sexually active. As noted above, אַרְבָּה ('ahavah, "love") probably denotes "sexual passion" (DCH 1:141 s.v. אַרְבָּה HALOT 18 s.v. אַרְבָּה ('ahavah, "love") probably denotes "to stir up, excite" (HALOT 802-803 s.v. אור אַרָּבָּה ("awake") is used in Song 4:16 and Hosea 7:4 in reference to stirring up sexual passion to excitement.

<sup>6</sup> tn The syntactical function of the article on הַּאַהֶּבֶּה (ha'ahavah, "love") is debated. Most translations view this as an example of the article denoting an abstract concept. However, a few translations (KJV, AV, JB, NEB) view it as an abstract use of the article for the concrete (abstractum pro concreto), and render it as "my love" as referring either to the woman's own feelings or the feelings of her lover. Throughout the Song, the term אֲהַבָּה ('ahavah, "love") is not used as a term for endearment in reference to one of the lovers; it typically refers to sexual passion (Song 2:4, 5, 7; 3:5; 5:4; 8:4, 6. 7). When used of the man/woman relationship, the term ("love") may refer to emotional love (Eccl 9:1, 6; Prov 15:17; Ps 109:4-5) or sexual love/desire (Gen 29:20; 2 Sam 1:26; 13:4, 15; Prov 5:19-20; 7:18; Jer 2:33; Song 2:4, 5, 7; 3:5; 5:4; 8:4, 6, 7) (DCH 1:141 s.v. ו אָרָבָּה; HALOT 18 s.v. ו אָהַבָּה). The reference to sexual desire in 2:4-5 and חולָת אָהַבָּה (kholat 'ahavah, "love-sickness") in 2:5 suggests that the use of אָהַבָּה ("love") in 2:7 is sexual desire. Love is personified in this picture.

7 th Heb "If you arouse or if you awaken love before it pleases..." Paraphrase: "Promise that you will not arouse or awaken love until it pleases!" This line is a typical Hebrew negative oath formula in which the speaker urges his/her audience to take a vow to not do something that would have destructive consequences: (1) The expression "קַּשְּׁבְּעָהֵר (hishba'ti, "I adjure

The Arrival of the Lover

# The Beloved about Her Lover:

2:8 Listen! My lover is approaching! Look! Here he comes, leaping over the mountains, bounding over the hills!
2:9 My lover is like a gazelle or a young stag. Look! There he stands behind our wall,

The Season of Love and the Song of the Turtle-Dove

#### The Lover to His Beloved:

gazing through the window, peering through the lattice.

2:10 My lover spoke to me, saying: "Arise, my darling; My beautiful one, come away with me! 2:11 Look! The winter has passed, the winter rains are over and gone.

2:12 The pomegranates have appeared<sup>5</sup> in the land,

the time for pruning and singing<sup>6</sup> has come;

the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land.

2:13 The fig tree has budded, the vines have blossomed and give off their fragrance.

Arise, come away my darling; my beautiful one, come away with me!"

The Dove in the Clefts of En-Gedi

#### The Lover to His Beloved:

2:14 O my dove, in the clefts of the rock, in the hiding places of the mountain crags,

let me see your face, let me hear your voice; for your voice is sweet, and your face is lovely.

you") is used when a speaker urges his audience to take an oath. (2) The conditional clause אָם־הָעוֹרְרוֹ אֶת־הָאָהָרוֹ ('im-ta'iru veim-te'oreru 'et-ha'ehavah, "If you arouse or awaken love...") reflects the typical construction of a negative oath formula which consists of two parts: (1) protasis: the warning introduced by the conditional particle and ("if") and (2) apodosis: the description of the disaster or penalty which would befall the person who broke the vow and violated the condition of the oath. (3) If the consequences of violating the oath were extremely severe, they would not even be spoken; the statement of the consequences would be omitted for emphasis - as is the case here, that is, the apodosis is omitted for rhetorical emphasis. As is typical in negative oath formulas, the sanction or curse on the violation of the condition is suppressed for rhetorical emphasis. The curse was so awful that one could not or dare not speak of them (M. H. Pope, IDB

**1 tn** Heb "The voice of my beloved!" The exclamation קיל (*qol*, "Listen!") is an introductory exclamatory particle used to emphasize excitement and the element of surprise.

2 tn The phrase "is approaching" does not appear in Hebrew but is supplied in the translation for the sake of clarity.

**3 tn** The exclamation הַנֵּדֹיֶה (hinneh-zeh, "Look!") is used of excited speech when someone is seen approaching (Isa 21:9).

4 sn Gazelles are often associated with sensuality and masculine virility in ancient Near Eastern love literature. Gazelles were often figures in Hebrew, Akkadian, and Ugaritic literature for mighty warriors or virile young men (e.g., 2 Sam 1:19; 2:18; Isa 14:9; Zech 10:3). In ancient Near Eastern love literature gazelles often symbolize the excitement and swiftness of the lover coming to see his beloved, as in an ancient Egyptian love song: "O that you came to your sister swiftly like a bounding gazelle! Its feet reel, its limbs are weary, terror has entered its body. A hunter pursues it with his hounds, they do not see it in its dust; It sees a resting place as a trap, it takes the river as its road. May you find her hiding-place before your hand is kissed four times. Pursue your sister's love, the Golden gives her to you, my friend!" ("Three Poems" in the Papyrus Chester Beatty 1 collection).

5 tn Heb "are seen."

6 tn Alternately, "the time of singing" or "the time of pruning." The homonymic root יְמִיר (zamir) means "song, singing" (HALOT 273 s.v. וְמִיר ; DCH 3:117 s.v. וְמִיר a), while וְמִיר II means "pruning, trimming" (HALOT 273 s.v. II; DCH 3:117 s.v. II). The intended root is debated among the ancient versions (LXX, Aquila, Symmachus, Vulgate, Targum), Hebrew lexicographers (HALOT 273; DCH 3:117), and translations: "singing" (KJV, NIV, NASB margin, NJPS margin), "pruning" (NASB, NJPS). However, rather than choosing between these two roots, it is likely that this is an example of intentional ambiguity. The preceding line draws out the meaning of מיר ("trimming, pruning"): "The pomegranates are seen in the land, the time of pruning has come." The following line draws out the meaning of מִיר ("singing"): "The time of singing has come, the voice of the turtledove is heard in the land." This homonymic wordplay creates an example of "janus parallelism" between the three poetic lines which play off both root meanings of the intentionally ambiguous homonym. This elegant wordplay and the AB:BA "janus parallelism" may be represented thus: "The pomegranates are seen in the land, the time has come for pruning // singing, the voice of the turtledove is heard in the land."

7 sn The dove was a common figure for romantic love in ancient Near Eastern love literature. This emphasis seems to be suggested by his use of the term "my dove." Just as the young man heard the voice of the turtledove in 2:12, so now he wants to hear her voice. Doves were often associated with timidity in the ancient world. Being virtually defenseless, they would often take refuge in crevices and cliffs for safety (Jer 48:28). The emphasis on timidity and the need for security is undoubtedly the emphasis here because of the explicit description of this "dove" hiding in the "clefts of the rock" and in "the hiding places of the mountain crevice." Fortresses were sometimes built in the clefts of the rocks on mountainsides because they were inaccessible and therefore, in a secure place of safety (Jer 49:16; Obad 3). Perhaps he realized it might be intimidating for her to join him and communicate with him freely. She would need to feel secure in his love to do this. It would be easy for her to hide from such emotionally exposing experiences.

The Foxes in the Vineyard

#### The Beloved to Her Lover:

2:15 Catch<sup>1</sup> the foxes<sup>2</sup> for us, the little foxes,<sup>3</sup> that ruin the vineyards<sup>4</sup> – for our vineyard is in bloom.

Poetic Refrain: Mutual Possession

#### The Beloved about Her Lover:

2:16 My lover is mine and I am his; he grazes among the lilies.<sup>5</sup>

1 tn The imperative ប្រាស្ត ('ekhezu, "catch") is plural in form (Qal imperative 2nd person masculine plural from ក្មេន, 'akhuz). Some commentators suggest that the woman is speaking to a large audience, perhaps the maidens of Jerusalem mentioned in 2:7. However, the Hebrew plural can function in an intensive sense when used in reference to a single individual (IBHS 122 §7.4.3a). As noted previously, the bride often uses the plural in reference to herself or to her bridegroom in Sumerian love literature. Thus, the woman simply may be speaking to her beloved, as in 2:16-17, but with particularly intense passion.

2 sn The term "foxes" is used metaphorically. Foxes are always spoken of in a negative light in the OT and in the ancient world were particularly associated with their destructive tendencies with regard to vineyards (Judg 15:4; Neh 4:3; Ps 63:10; Lam 5:18; Ezek 13:4). The description of these foxes as being destructive here seems to confirm that this is the point of comparison in mind.

3 sn In ancient Near Eastern love literature it was common to use wild animals to symbolize potential problems which could separate lovers and destroy their love. For instance, in Egyptian love songs it is the crocodile, rather than the foxes, which were used as figures for obstacles which might threaten a couple's love. Here the "foxes" are probably used figuratively to represent potentially destructive problems which could destroy their romantic relationship and which could hinder it from ripening into marriage.

4 sn The term "vineyard" is also a figure. In 1:6 she used the vineyard motif as a metaphor for her physical appearance, but here it is "our vineyards" which is probably a figure for their romantic relationship. The phrase "in bloom" makes the metaphor more specific, so that the phrase "our vineyards are in bloom" means that their romantic love relationship was in its initial stages, that is, before it had ripened into marriage.

5 sn This line may be translated either as "the one who grazes among the lilies" or as "the one who feeds [his flock] among the lilies." The latter would picture him as a shepherd pasturing his flock among a bed of flowers which they were eating, while the former would be picturing him as a gazelle feeding among a bed of flowers. Because of the occurrence of the gazelle motif in the following verse, it is most likely that this motif is present in this verse as well. Although it seems likely that he is therefore being pictured as a gazelle eating these flowers, it is far from clear as to what this figurative picture denotes. It is possible that it conveys the peaceful nature of his relationship with her because she was earlier portrayed as a lily (e.g., 2:1).

The Gazelle and the Rugged Mountains

# The Beloved to Her Lover:

2:17 Until the dawn arrives<sup>6</sup> and the shadows flee, turn,<sup>7</sup> my beloved – be like a gazelle or a young stag on the mountain gorges.<sup>8</sup>

6 sn Heb "until the day breathes," which is figurative (personification) for the morning, that is, the time when the day begin its "life" (e.g., Song 4:6). Likewise, "the shadows flee" is figurative (personification) for the dawn, i.e., the time when the dark shadows of the night disappear, or the shadows of the evening which lengthen and are just as fleeting.

7 tn The exact meaning of סב (sov, Qal imperative 2nd person masculine singular from מַבֶּב, savav, "to turn") in this context is uncertain. The imperatival form may be classified as an invitation. HALOT notes that מבב ("to turn") occasionally denotes "to sit [lie] at a table" (1 Sam 16:11; Sir 9:9) and suggests that this is a figurative use of this nuance (HALOT 739 s.v. מבב 2c). The Beloved would be issuing an invitation to him to "turn aside to sit" at her table, that is, to enjoy the delights of her love. On the other hand, at ("Turn!") may simply be a synonym for the following parallel imperative דָּמָה ( $d^emeh$ , "Be like!"), that is, "turn, change" (HALOT 224 s.v. קֿם). In keeping with the extended simile in which the Beloved compares him to a gazelle or stag leaping upon the mountains, the term in may simply denote "turn oneself around, change direction" (HALOT 739 s.v. 1). Rather than leaping somewhere else, so to speak, she invites him to leap upon the "mountain gorg-

**8 tn** The expression הָרֵי בָּתֵר (hare bater, "mountains of Bethar") is difficult because there is no known mountainrange which was ever called by this name. The meaning of the noun בתר (beter) is uncertain. DCH distinguishes between three homonymic nouns: (בתר I noun "part, piece" (Gen לבינת (מבר ולאור). Jer 34:19) related to the verb בין "to cut in two" (Gen 15:10); (2) ובֶּרֶר ווו בֶּרֶר (I noun "gorge" (Song 2:17); and (3) בֶּרֶר (I place name "Bether" in Judah and 6.5 miles (11 km) SW of Jerusalem (Josh 15:59; 1 Chr 6:44; perhaps Song 2:17) (DCH 2:291 s.v. בֶּתֶר). Thus, הֶרֵי בָתֶר might mean "mountains of gorge[s]" or "mountains of Bether" (DCH 2:291 s.v. III). The Hebrew root בתר (batar, "cut in pieces, cut in half") is related to Arabic batara "to cut off" (HALOT 167 s.v. בתר; BDB 144 בַּתֶר). The word does not appear in Ugaritic, Akkadian, or Syriac. Aramaic בָּאתֵר (ba'tar, "after, behind") was used frequently in Northwest Semitic (DISO 45-46) and Late Hebrew (Jastrow 201 s.v. בַּאתַר); however, it offers little to this problem. Many scholars take בֶּתֶר as a genitive of description functioning as an attributive adjective. For example, BDB suggests that בֶּתֶר means "mountains of cutting," that is, "cleft mountains" (BDB 144 s.v. בתר), while Koehler posits "ravine," that is, mountains with a ravine (HALOT 167 s.v. II בֶּתֶר ). This is reflected in the LXX's κοιλωμάτων (koilomaton, "hollow places, basin, cavity"): ὄρη κοιλωμάτων (orē koilōmatōn) "mountains with many ravines." This approach is adopted by several translations, e.g., "rugged mountains" (NLT). On the other hand, Vulgate, Aquila, and Symmachus took it as a place name referring to the town of Bether (LXX  $B\alpha\iota\theta\eta\rho$  = Mishnaic Hebrew ביתר) located 6.5 miles (11 km) southwest of Jerusalem (Josh 15:59; 1 Chr 6:44). This approach is adopted by several translations: "mountains of Bether" (KJV, ASV, RSV, NASB, NIV margin, TEV). Theodotion takes it as a "incense") which reflects a variant Hebrew reading of בַּשֶּמִים (beshamim, "balsam, perfume") which also appears in Song 8:14. This approach is taken in a Jewish-English translation: "hills of spice" (NJPS). The botanist Löw connects Hebrew to Greek μαλαβάθρον (malabathron) which was an Indian spice plant imported to Judah. See I. Low, Die Flora der Juden, 2:117-118. The expression "cleft mountains" (הרי בֶּתֶר) might refer simply to a rugged and jagged mountainrange (NLT "rugged mountains"; NIV "rugged hills"). However, this may be a figurative description of the woman's cleavage because similar imagery is used in Song 4:6 to describe her

The Lost Lover is Found

The Beloved about Her Lover: 3:1 All night long<sup>1</sup> on my bed<sup>2</sup> I longed for<sup>3</sup> my lover.<sup>4</sup> I longed for<sup>5</sup> him but he never appeared.<sup>6</sup>

breasts. The name "Tihamah" (literally "the Great Deep") was applied to the low-lying coastland between the mountains of Yemen and the Red Sea as well as to the depression of Djauf (Dumah) because of fresh-water springs which oozed up from below (Hebrew "Tehom" and "Tehomot," Ugaritic "Tihamaten" or "Tahamatum," Akkadian "Tiamat"). And it appears that in an Ammonite inscription that an area near the mountainous region of Rabbath-Amman is referred to by the name "Tymtn" (literally "The Two Depressions"), rather than by its real name (W. F. Albright, "Some Comments on the Amman Citadel Inscription," BASOR 198 [April 1978]: 38-39).

sn Scholars offer three interpretations of her figurative request: (1) The Beloved desires her Lover to embrace her breasts, like a gazelle romping over mountains (mountains are figurative); (2) The Beloved entreats her Lover to leave and go back over the hills from whence he had journeyed (mountains are literal); and (3) As her Lover prepares to leave her country village, the Beloved asks him to return to her again in the same way he arrived, like a gazelle bounding over the mountains in 2:8-10 (mountains are literal).

בּילֵילָת (ballelot, plural of "night") functions as an adverbial accusative of time. The plural form בְּילִית (ballelot, plural of "night") functions as an adverbial accusative of time. The plural form בְּילִילָּת from בִּילִילָּת (laylah, "night") can be classified in several ways: (1) plural of number: "night after night" (NASB, NEB); (2) plural of extension: "all night long" (NIV); (3) plural of composition: "by night" (KJV) and "at night" (NJPS); or (4) plural of intensity: "during the blackest night." The plural of extension ("all night long") is supported by (1) the four-fold repetition of the verb "pta (baqash, "to seek") in 3:1-2 which emphasizes that the Beloved was continually looking for her lover all night long, (2) her decision to finally arise in the middle of the night to look for him in 3:2-4, and (3) her request in the immediately preceding verse (2:17) that he make love to her all night long: "until the day breathes and the shadows flee...." One should note, however, that the plural בּיִלִילֹת sa plural of composition: "by night" (NJPS) or "of the night" (NJSB. NIV) or "in the night" (KJV).

(NASB, NIV) or "in the night" (KJV).

sn The use of the term בַּילִיתׁ (ballelot, "night") in 3:1 stands in striking contrast to the use of the term היוב (hayyom, "the day") in 2:17 which is the preceding verse. In 2:17 the woman invited her beloved to make love to her all night long; however, in 3:1 she recounts a nightmarish experience in which she was unable to find her beloved next to her in bed. Scholars debate whether 3:1-4 recounts a nightmare-like dream sequence or a real-life experience. There are striking parallels between 3:1-4 and 5:2-8 which also raises the possibility of a nightmare-like dream sequence.

2 tn The term מְשֶׁבֶּר (mishkav, "bed") in 3:1 is the common term for marriage bed (HALOT 646 s.v. מְשֶׁבֶּר BDB 1012 s.v. מְשֶׁבֶּר in distinction from the common term for שֵּישֶׁב ('eresh, "couch") in 1:16. Several uses of the term מֵשְׁבֶּר ("bed") have overt sexual connotations, denoting the place of copulation (Gen 49:4; Lev 18:22; 20:13; Num 31:17, 35; Judg 21:11, 12; Prov 7:17; Isa 57:7-8). The noun is used in the expression מֵשְׁבֶּב דִּרִים (mishkav dodim, "love-bed") with obvious sexual connotations (Ezek 23:17).

3 th Heb "I sought...." The verb שַּבְּשֶׁ (baqash, "to seek") denotes the attempt to physically find someone (e.g., 1 Sam 13:14; 16:16; 28:7; 1 Kgs 1:2-3; Isa 40:20; Ezek 22:30; Esth 2:2; Job 10:6; Prov 18:1) (HALOT 152 s.v. שַּבְּשׁ). However, it is clear in 3:1 that this "search" took place upon her bed. It does not make sense in the context that the Beloved was looking around in her bed to find her lover – how big could her bed be that she had lost him? Rather, שֵבְשׁ ("to seek") is used metonymically to reference to her longing for her absent lover, that is, seeking in the sense of anticipation. The perfect tense should be classified as a past constantive action, describing a past action which covered an extended period of time, as indicated by the phrase שִׁלְילוֹת plural of extension, "all night long") in 3:1. This continual action is emphasized by the four-fold repetition of שׁבְּשׁ ("seek") in 3:1-2.

4 tn Heb "the one whom my soul loves." The expression נָפְּשֵׁי (nafshi, "my soul") is a synecdoche of part for the whole (= the woman). The expression נפשי ("my soul") is often used as independent personal pronoun. It often expresses personal preference, such as love or hatred (e.g., Gen 27:4, 25; Lev 26:11, 30; Judg 5:24; Isa 1:14) (HALOT 712 s.v. נַפַשׁ). The term נפש (nefesh, "soul") is used over 150 times in OT to refer to the seat of a person's emotions and passions (BDB 660 ร.v. มูตุ c.6.a) (e.g., Deut 12:15, 20, 21; 14:26; 18:6; 21:14; 24:15; 1 Sam 23:30; 2 Sam 14:14; 1 Kgs 11:37; Isa 26:8; Jer 2:24; 22:27; 34:16; 44:14; Ezek 16:27; Hos 4:8; Mic 7:1; Pss 10:3; 24:4; 25:1; 35:25; 78:18; 86:4; 105:22; 143:8; Prov 13:4; 19:8; 21:10; Job 23:13; Song 5:6). It often refers to the seat of love (BDB 660 s.v. d.6.e) (e.g., Gen 34:3, 8; Jer 12:7; Ps 63:9; Song 1:7; 3:1-4). The expression אַת־שֵאָהַבָה נפשי ('et-she'ahavah nafshi, "the one whom I love"; Heb "the one whom my soul loves") is repeated four times in 3:1-4. The repetition emphasizes her intense love for her beloved. The noun אַהְבָּה ('ahavah, "love") is often used in reference to the love between a man and woman, particularly in reference to emotional, romantic, or sexual love (2 Sam 1:26; 13:15; Prov 5:19; 7:18; Song 2:4-5, 7; 3:5; 5:8; 8:4, 6-7; Jer 2:2, 33). Likewise, the verb אָהֶב ('ahev, "to love") often refers to emotional, romantic, or sexual love between a man and woman (e.g., Gen 24:67; 29:20, 30, 32; 34:3; Deut 21:15, 16; Judg 14:16; 16:4, 15; 1 Sam 1:5; 18:20; 2 Sam 13:1, 4, 15; 1 Kgs 11:1; 2 Chr 11:21; Neh 13:26; Esth 2:17; Eccl 9:9; Song 1:3, 4, 7; 3:1-4; Jer 22:20, 22; Ezek 16:33, 36-37; 23:5, 9, 22; Hos 2:7-15; 3:1; Lam 1:19).

5 tn Heb "I searched for him" or "I sought him" (see study note above).

6 tc The LXX adds "I called him but he did not answer me" (ἐκάλεσα αὐτόν καὶ οὐχ ὑπήκουσέν μου, ekalesa auton kai ouch hupēkousen) to 3:2d on the basis of its appearance in the parallel expressions in Song 5:6. There is no textual support for its inclusion here.

tn Heb "but I did not find him." The verb מָצָא (matsa', "to find") normally describes discovering the whereabouts of something/someone who is lost or whose presence is not known. It is clear in 3:1 that the Beloved was not taking a physically active role in looking all around for him, because she stayed in her bed all night long during this time. Therefore, the verb מָצָא ("to find") must be nuanced metonymically in terms of him appearing to her. It does not denote "finding" him physically, but visually; that is, if and when he would arrive at her bedside, she would "find" him. This might allude to her request in 2:17 for him to rendezvous with her to make love to her all night long ("until the day breathes and the shadows flee"). Despite the fact that she was waiting for him all night long, he never appeared (3:1). The verb מָנָא ("to find") is repeated four times in 3:1-4, paralleling the four-fold repetition of בַּקש (baqash, "to seek"). This antithetical word-pair creates a strong and dramatic contrast.

3:2 "I will arise¹ and look all around² throughout the town, and throughout the streets³ and squares; I will search for my beloved." I searched for him but I did not find him.⁴ 3:3 The night watchmen found me – the ones who guard the city walls.⁵ "Have you seen my beloved?" and I passed them by when I found my beloved!

1 sn Three 1st person common singular cohortatives appear in verse 2: אָפְרְשָׁה ('aqumah, "I will arise"), אָפְרַשְׁה ('asov²vah, "I will go about"), and אַפְּבָשְׁה ('avaqshah, "I will seek"). These cohortatives have been taken in two basic senses: (1) resolve: "I will arise...I will go about...I will seek" (KJV, NIV) or (2) necessity: "I must arise...I must go about...I must seek" (NASB, NJPS). There is no ethical or moral obligation/necessity, but the context emphasizes her intense determination (e.g., 3:4b). Therefore, they should be classified as cohortatives of resolve, expressing the speaker's determination to pursue a course of action. The three-fold repetition of the cohortative form emphasizes the intensity of her determination.

tn The emphatic particle of exhortation או appears in the expression אָלְימָה ('aqumah nah, "I will arise..."). This particle is used with 1st person common singular cohortatives to emphasize self-deliberation and a determined resolve to act (BDB 609 s.v. אי b.3.a) (e.g., Gen 18:21; Exod 3:3; 2 Sam 14:15; Isa 5:1; Job 32:21).

2 tn The root מָבֶכ (savav) in the Qal stem means "to go around, to do a circuit" (1 Sam 7:16; 2 Chr 17:9; 23:2; Eccl 12:5; Song 3:3; Isa 23:16; Hab 2:16), while the Polel stem means "to prowl around" (Ps 59:7, 15; Song 3:2) (HALOT 739-740 s.v. בבב). The idea here is that the Beloved is determined to "look all around" until she finds her beloved.

3 sn There is a consonantal wordplay in 3:2 between the roots בֶּלֶם and בָּשׁבֶּ , that is, between מַבְּלֶשׁה ('avaqshah, "I will seek [him]") and בְּשֶׁרְבֶּוֹ (bashshevaqim, "streets"). The wordplay emphasizes that she searched in every nook and cranny

לא בְּלֵשְׁתֵּיו וְלֹא בְּעָצְּאַתְיו (biqqashtiv velo' metsa'tiv, "I sought him but I did not find him") appears twice in 3:1-2. In both cases it concludes a set of cola. The repetition depicts her mounting disappointment in her failure to locate her beloved. It stands in strong contrast with 3:4.

5 tn Heb "those who go around the city" or "those who go around in the city." The expression הַמַּבְבִים בָּעֵיר ( $hassov^evim$ ba'ir, "those who go around the city") probably refers to the watchmen of the city walls rather than night city street patrol (e.g., Ps 127:1; Song 5:7; Isa 21:11; 62:6). The Israelite night watchmen of the walls is paralleled by the Akkadian sahir duri ("one who goes around the wall") which appears in a lexical text as the equivalent of ma-sar musi ("night watchman") (CAD 4:192). See M. H. Pope, Song of Songs (AB), 419. There is a wordplay in 3:2-3 between the verb בְּבֶּה (va'asovevah, "I will go about") and בְּבָה (hassovevim, "those who go around"). This wordplay draws attention to the ironic similarity between the woman's action and the action of the city's watchmen. Ironically, she failed to find her beloved as she went around in the city, but the city watchmen found her. Rather than finding the one she was looking for, she was found.

6 tn Heb "the one whom my soul loves – have you seen [him]?" The normal Hebrew word-order (verb-subject-direct object) is reversed in 3:3 (direct object-verb-subject) to emphasize the object of her search: אַר יַּאָהָרְהָּה נַפְּשִׁי רָאִיהָם ('et she'ahavah nafshi re'item, "The one whom my soul loves – have you seen [him]?").

7 th Heb "like a little." The term בְּמֶּבֶּשׁ  $(kim^iat)$ , which is composed of the comparative preposition  $(k^e)$ , "like") prefixed to the noun בְּעָבּ  $(m^e$ 'at, "the small, the little, the few"), is an idiom that means "within a little" or "scarcely" (BDB 590 s.v. בעש b.2.a).

I held onto him<sup>8</sup> tightly and would not let him go<sup>9</sup>

until I brought him to my mother's house, 10

to the bedroom chamber<sup>11</sup> of the one who conceived me.

The Adjuration Refrain

# The Beloved to the Maidens:

3:5<sup>12</sup> I admonish you, O maidens of Jerusalem.

by the gazelles and by the young does of the open fields:

**8 tn** Heb "I held him" (אַתּוֹתָּיוּ, 'akhaztiv'). The term אָתּוֹ ('akhaz, "grasp") denotes to forcefully seize someone to avoid losing hold of him (BDB 28 s.v. אַהוֹה b).

9 tn The verb רְבָּה (rafah, "to let go") means to relax one's grip on an object or a person (HALOT 1276-77 s.v. רפה; BDB 952 s.v. רֶפֶה 2). The Hiphil stem means "to let loose" (Job 7:19; 27:6; Song 3:4; Sir 6:27) or "to release from one's hands" (Deut 9:14; Josh 10:6; Ps 37:8). The negative expression לא רַפַּה (lo' rafah, "to not let [someone or something] go") denotes an intense desire or effort to not lose possession of someone or something (Job 27:6; Prov 4:13). Here the expression ילא אַרפַנו (velo' 'arpennu, "I would not let him go") pictures her determination to hold on to him so she would not lose him again. The shift from a suffix-conjugation (perfect) אָדוֹתִיוּ ('akhaztiv, "I grasped him") to a prefix-conjugation (imperfect) ארכבנו ('arpennu, "I would [not] let him go") depicts a shift from a completed/consummative action (perfect: she took hold of his hand) to an ongoing/progressive action (imperfect: she would not let go of it). A basic distinction between the perfect and imperfect tenses is that of consummative versus progressive action. The literary/syntactical structure of אַהוֹהִייו ולא ארפנו ("I grasped him and I would not let him go") in 3:4 mirrors that of בַּקְשַׁתִּיו וַלֹא מָנֶאַתִיו (biqqashtiv velo' metsa'tiv, "I searched for him but I could not find him") in 3:1-2. This parallelism in the literary and syntactical structure emphasizes the fortunate reversal of situation.

10 sn There is debate about the reason why the woman brought her beloved to her mother's house. Campbell notes that the mother's house is sometimes referred to as the place where marital plans were made (Gen 24:28; Ruth 1:8). Some suggest, then, that the woman here was unusually bold and took the lead in proposing marriage plans with her beloved. This approach emphasizes that the marriage plans in 3:4 are followed by the royal wedding procession (3:6-11) and the wedding night (4:1-5:1). On the other hand, others suggest that the parallelism of "house of my mother" and "chamber of she who conceived me" focuses on the bedroom of her mother's house. Fields suggests that her desire was to make love to her beloved in the very bedroom chambers where she herself was conceived, to complete the cycle of life/love. If this is the idea, it would provide a striking parallel to a similar picture in 8:5 in which the woman exults that they had made love in the very location where her beloved had been conceived: "Under the apple tree I aroused you; it was there your mother conceived you, there she who bore you conceived you.'

11 tn The term הְּדֶּרְ (kheder, "chamber") literally means "dark room" (HALOT s.v. פול בין 293) and often refers to a bedroom (Gen 43:30; Exod 7:28 HT [8:3 ET]; Judg 3:24; 15:1; 16:9, 12; 2 Sam 4:7; 13:10; 1 Kgs 1:15; 2 Kgs 6:12; 9:2; Ecol 10:20; Isa 26:20; Joel 2:16; Prov 24:4; Song 1:4; 3:4).

12 tn See the notes on these lines at 2:7.

"Do not awake or arouse love until it pleases!"

The Royal Wedding Procession

# The Speaker:1

3:6 Who is this coming up from the desert like a column of smoke, like<sup>2</sup> a fragrant billow<sup>3</sup> of myrrh and frankincense,<sup>4</sup> every kind of fragrant powder<sup>5</sup> of the traveling merchants?<sup>6</sup>
3:7 Look! It is Solomon's portable couch!<sup>7</sup>

1 sn It is not certain whether the speaker here is the Beloved or not.

2 tn The comparative "like" does not appear in the Hebrew but is supplied in the translation for the sake of clarity.

3 tn The proper nuance of מקטרת ( $m^e$ qutteret, Pual participle fs from קמר, *qatar*, "to make a sacrifice, go up in smoke") is illusive. The lexicons take the participle adjectivally and translate מקטרת מור ( $m^e$ qutteret mor) as "completely filled with fragrance or incense" (HALOT 1094 s.v. | קמר) or "fumigated with myrrh" (BDB 883 s.v. קמֶר). Most translations take it adjectivally: "perfumed with myrrh" (KJV, NASB, NIV); however, NJPS takes it as a substantive: "clouds of myrrh." It is better to take the participle as a substantive and to nuance מַקְמֵי as "billow of myrrh," as suggested by its parallelism with בתימרות עשן ( $k^e$ timarot 'ashan, "like a column of smoke"). While this is the only usage of the Pual stem of the verb, the root קמר appears frequently in other stems, all of which connote smoke, e.g., Piel: "to make a sacrifice, to go up in smoke" and Hiphil: "to cause to go up in smoke" (HALOT 1094-95 s.v. ו קתר). In Middle Hebrew the root קתר (qitra') meant "to steam, smell" (Qal) and "to smoke" (Hiphil). The Hebrew root is related to Ugaritic qtr "smoke, incense" (UT 19.2220; WUS 1404); Akkadian qataru "to billow (of smoke)" (AHw 2:907; CAD Q:166); Old South Arabic mqtr "incense; Ethiopic qetare "fragrance, spice"; Arabic *qatara* "to smell, smoke"; and Syriac 'etar "vapour, fume, incense" (*HALOT* 1094). Due to the rarity of the Pual stem of this root, the Targum mistakenly vocalized the form as Piel participle מְקְּמֹרֶת (miggetoret, "going up in smoke").

 $^4$  tn The term לְבֵּלְהָ ( $l^e$ vonah, "frankincense") refers to fragrant incense (Exod 30:34; Lev 2:1, 15; 5:11; 6:8; 24:7; Num 5:15; Isa 43:23; 66:3; Jer 6:20; 17:26; 41:5; Neh 13:5, 9; 1 Chr 9:29; Song 3:6; 4:6, 14). It is composed of the white (sometimes yellow) resin of Boswellia Carteri and Frereana from Hadramawt and Somaliland (HALOT 518 s.v.  $^{-1}$ ).

5 tn The term אָבְיה ('avqat, "fragrant-powder") means "scent-powders" (HALOT 9 s.v. אָבָה) or "ground spice" (HALOT 1237 s.v. כל 1.2.a). The noun אַבְּקָה ('avaqah) is from the root אַבְּקָה ('avaq, 'dust, powder") (HALOT 9 s.v.).

\$\begin{align\*} 6 \text{ tn The singular form of 'rickhel, "merchant") may be classified as a generic singular, representing the genus of the merchant guild of which there are many. The term ביבל means "trader, vendor," as small retailer (HALOT 1237 s.v. I 'shopkeeper, dealer" as large wholesaler (HALOT 750 s.v. \cdot). It may refer to a traveling merchant, as in Middle Hebrew ביבלה (rokhelah) "traveling merchant" and Old South Arabic rki "to go about as a trader" (Conti 242a). The general nuance appears in Judean Aramaic \cdot \cdot \cdot (rokhela', "hawker, peddler") and Syriac rakkala "merchant."

7 th The term מְשָׁה (mittah) refers to a "royal portable couch" spread with covers, cloth, and pillows (HALOT 573 s.v. אום באר 1905). The Hebrew noun is related to Ugaritic mt "bed" (UT 1465). The term אום ("bed, couch") itself can refer to a number of similar but different kinds of pieces of reclining furniture: (1) the bed of a common person, found in the bed-chamber for reposing and sleeping at night (Gen 47:31; 48:2; 49:33; Exod 8:3[7:28]; 2 Sam 4:7; 1 Kgs 17:19; 2 Kgs 4:10, 21, 32; Ps 6:6[7]; Prov 26:14); (2) the royal bed of the king or nobility, often elevated and made of expensive materials (1 Kgs 21:4; 2 Kgs 1:4, 6, 16; 2 Chr 24:25; Esth 7:8; Amos 6:4;

It is surrounded by sixty warriors, some of Israel's mightiest warriors.

3:8 All of them are skilled with a sword,<sup>8</sup> well-trained in the art of warfare.<sup>9</sup>

Ezek 23:41); (3) the couch of a common person for reclining or sitting during the day (1 Sam 28:23); (4) a royal banqueting couch for reclining at feasts or carousing (Ezek 23:41; Amos 3:12; 6:4; Esth 1:6; 7:8); (5) a portable light-weight bed for transporting the sick (1 Sam 19:15); (6) a portable bed, such as a funeral bier for transporting the dead (2 Sam 3:31); and (7) a portable royal couch for transporting the king (Song 3:7). The royal couch was often made of expensive materials, such as ivory, silver, and gold (Ezek 23:41; Amos 6:4; Song 3:9-10; Esth 1:6).

8 tn Heb "trained of sword" or "girded of sword." Alternately, "girded with swords." The genitive construct phrase אחוי מהבב ('akhuze kherev) is interpreted in two ways: (1) Most interpret it with the assumption that אהו ('akhaz) denotes "to physically grasp, hold" (HALOT 31-32 s.v. אחוז); BDB 28 s.v. אַדֶּוֹי). Most translations adopt this approach, although differing on whether the participle functions substantivally (NASB), verbally (KJV, NIV), or adjectivally (RSV), they all are heading in the same direction: "[all] hold swords" (KJV), "girded with sword" (RSV), "wielders of the sword" (NASB), and "wearing the sword" (NIV). This, however, provides only a vague parallel with the following colon: מֶלְמֵבֶּר מֶלְרְתָּבֶּה (melummede milkhamah, "trained in warfare"). (2) Others, however, suggest taking אהי in its rare metaphorical sense of "to learn" (= mentally grasp, take hold of): "learned, skillful" (R. Gordis, Song of Songs and Lamentations, 85; J. Lewy, "Lexicographical Notes," HUCA 12/13 (1937/1938): 98-99). This nuance is much more common in the related Akkadian verb ahazu "to learn," as HALOT 31 notes. Likewise, JB renders it "skilled swordsmen," and NJPS suggests "trained in warfare" for Song 3:8, citing Akkadian ahazu "to learn." The Akkadian verb ahazu has a broad range of meanings including: (1) to seize, hold a person, (2) to take a wife, to marry, (3) to hold, possess, take over, grasp something, to take to (a region), and (4) to learn, to understand (CAD 1:1:173). The concrete, physical sense of grasping or taking an object in one's hands lent itself to the metaphorical sense of mentally grasping something, that is, learning or understanding. The category ahazu 4 ("to learn, to understand") is used in reference to general learning, as well to specialized knowledge involving a special skill, professional craft, or ability acquired through instruction and experience (CAD 1:1:177). The causative form suhuzu means "to teach, educate, train" someone to become a skilled craftsman in a professional trade (CAD 1:1:180). This provides a tight parallelism with the following colon: אחוי מרב ('akhuze kherev, "skillful in swordsmanship") precisely parallels מְלְמֶבֵי מְלְחָמָה ("well-trained in [the art of] warfare"). The AB:AB parallelism between the two lines is exact: (1) אָרָדָיי "learned, skillful" parallels מְלַמְבֵי "trained, instructed," and (2) "in respect to swordsmanship" (genitive of specification or limitation) exactly parallels מְלְחָמָה "in regard to [the art of] warfare" (genitive of specification or limitation). The term הֶרֶב ("sword") may be nuanced metonymically as "swordsmanship" in the light of (a) its collocation with terms for professional expertise: מֶלְמֶבֶי ("trained") and אָדְוָיָ ("skilled"), and (b) the connotation "swordsmanship" can be sustained in a few cases, e.g., "It was not by their swordsmanship that they won the land, nor did their arm bring them victory" (Ps 44:3). In the genitive construct phrase הֶרֶב , the genitive noun הֶרֶב , the genitive noun ("sword") may be classified either as (1) a genitive of specification; "[skilled] in respect to swordsmanship" or (2) a genitive of instrument; "[skilled] with a sword."

ף לְּחַבֵּי Heb "trained of war." In the genitive construct בְּלְמְבֵּי (melunmede milkhamah, "trained of war") the noun בְּלְרְמָבְּּה ("war, battle") is a genitive of specification or limitation, that is, it specifies the extent to which the expertise of the subjects applies: "in regard to warfare." The term בְּלִבְּיִה ("warfare") may be nuanced metonymically as "the art of warfare" in the light of (1) its collocation with terms for professional expertise: בְּלְבִּילִבְּיִה ("trained") and בַּלְבִּיל ("akhuze, "skilled"), and (2) its parallelism with ברוב (kherev, "sword, swordsmanship").

Each has his sword at his side, to guard against the terrors of the night. 3:9 King Solomon made a sedan chair<sup>1</sup> for himself of wood imported from Lebanon <sup>2</sup>

of wood imported from Lebanon.<sup>2</sup> 3:10 Its posts were made<sup>3</sup> of silver;<sup>4</sup>

its back<sup>5</sup> was made of gold. Its seat was upholstered with purple wool;<sup>6</sup> its interior was inlaid<sup>7</sup> with leather<sup>8</sup> by the

**1 tn** The term אַפּרִיין ('affiryon) is a hapax legomenon variously rendered "sedan-chair" (HALOT 80 s.v. אפריון) and "sedan, litter, palanquin" (BDB 68 s.v. אַפּרִיוּן). It occurs in Mishnaic Hebrew אָפּרִיין and Judean Aramaic אָפּרִיינָא ('affiryona', "bridal-litter"; Jastrow 108 s.v. (אַפּריוֹן) and Syriac pwrywn/ purya ("litter"). The Mishnah used אַבּרִיוֹן in reference to a bridal-litter: "In the last war it was decreed that a bride should not pass through the town in an אַפַּרִיוֹן but our Rabbis later sanctioned it" (Sotah 9:14). There are several views of the origin of the term: (1) LXX Greek φορεῖον (phoreion, "bridal-litter") is a loanword from Hebrew; the term is not used in Greek until the Koine period (LSJ 1950-51); (2) Sanskrit paryanka and palki "palanquin, sedan-chair" (M. Monier-Williams, Sanskrit-English Dictionary, 554); (3) Old Persian upariyana "litter-bed" (R. Gordis, "A Wedding Song for Solomon," JBL 63 [1944]: 263-70; G. Widengren, Sakrales Königtum im Alten Testament und im Judentum, 122); (4) less likely is Ugaritic apn "twowheeled cart" (UT 305); and (5) Egyptian pr "house" with the prefix ua and suffix yn meaning "palace" (G. Gerleman, "Die Bildsprache des Hohenliedes und die altegyptische Kunst," ASTI 1 [1962]: 24-30). A palanquin was a riding vehicle upon which a royal person sat and which was carried by servants who lifted it up by its staffs. Royalty and members of the aristocracy only rode in palanquins. The Illustrated Family Encyclopedia of the Living Bible, 10:55, describes what the typical royal palanquin was made of and looked like in the ancient world: "Only the aristocracy appear to have made use of litters in Israel. At a later period, in Greece, and even more so in Rome, distinguished citizens were carried through the city streets in splendid palanquins. In Egypt the litter was known as early as the third millennium B.C., as is testified by the one belonging to Queen Hetepheres, the mother of the Pharaoh Khufu (Cheops), which was found at Gaza. This litter is made of wood and inlaid in various places with gold decorations. Its total length is 6 ft. 10 in., and the length of the seat inside is 3 ft. 3 in. An inscription on the litter, of gold set in ebony, lists the queen's titles.

2 th Heb "with trees of Lebanon." In the genitive construct phrase מְעֵצֵּי הַלְּבְּנוֹן (me'atse hallevanon, "the wood of Lebanon") the genitive functions as a genitive of place of origin: "wood from Lebanon." The plural construct nous יצֵי ('atse, literally, "trees, woods" from יצָי, 'ats, "tree, wood") is a plural of composition: the plural is used to indicate composition, that is, what the sedan-chair was made out of. The plural is used because the sedan-chair was constructed from the wood from several trees or it was constructed from several pieces of wood (see IBHS 119-20 §7.4.1b; R. J. Williams, Hebrew Syntax, 7, §9; Joüon 2:500 §136.b).

3 tn Heb "He made its posts of silver."

4 tn The nouns בֶּמֶר (kesef, "silver"), הָבֹ (zahav, "gold") and ארגמן ('argaman, "purple") function as genitives of material out of which their respective parts of the palanquin were made: the posts, base, and seat. The elaborate and expensive nature of the procession is emphasized in this description. This litter was constructed with the finest and most expensive materials. The litter itself was made from the very best wood: cedar and cypress from Lebanon. These were the same woods which Solomon used in constructing the temple (1 Kgs 4:33-5:14). Silver was overlaid over the "posts," which were either the legs of the litter or the uprights which supported its canopy, and the "back" of the litter was overlaid with gold. The seat was made out of purple material, which was an emblem of royalty and which was used in the tabernacle (Exod 26:1f; 27:16; 28:5-6) and in the temple (2 Chr 3:14). Thus, the litter was made of the very best which Solomon could offer. Such extravagance reflected his love for his Beloved who rode upon it and would be seen upon it by all the Jerusalemites as she came into the city.

 $^{5}$  tn The noun רָפִירָה ( $r^{e}$ fidah) is a hapax legomenon whose meaning is uncertain. It may be related to the masculine noun רַבַּר (rafad, "camping place, station") referring to a stopping point in the wilderness march of Israel (Exod 17:1, 8; 19:2; Num 33:14); however, what any semantic connection might be is difficult to discern. The versions have translated רפידה variously: LXX ἀνάκλιτον (anakliton, "chair for reclining"), Vulgate reclinatorium ("support, back-rest of a chair") Peshitta teshwiteh dahba ("golden cover, throne sheathed in gold leaf"). Modern translators have taken three basic approaches: (1) Following the LXX and Vulgate ("support, rest, back of a chair"), BDB suggests "support," referring to the back or arm of the chair of palanquin (BDB 951 s.v. קבָּר). Several translations take this view, e.g., NRSV: "its back," NEB/REB: "its headrest," and NJPS: "its back." (2) Koehler-Baumgartner suggest "base, foundation of a saddle, litter" (KBL 905). Several translations follow this approach, e.g., KJV: "the bottom," NASB: "its base" (margin: "its support," and NIV: "its base." (3) G. Gerleman suggests the meaning "cover," as proposed by Peshitta. The first two approaches are more likely than the third. Thus, it probably refers either to (1) the back of the sedan-chair of the palanquin or (2) the foundation/base of the saddle/litter upon which the palanquin rested (HALOT 1276 s.v. רפד).

לי חד The Hebrew noun אַרְבֵּין ('argaman, "purple fabrio") is a loanword from Hittite argaman "tribute," which is reflected in Akkadian argamannu "purple" (also "tribute" under Hittite influence), Ugaritic argmn "tax, purple," and Aramaic argwn "purple" (HALOT 84 s.v. "ישרא ). The Hebrew term refers to wool dyed with red purple (BRL2 153; HALOT 84). It is used in reference to purple threads (Exod 35:25; 39:3; Esth 1:9) or purple cloth (Num 4:13; Judg 8:26; Esth 8:15; Prov 31:22; Jer 10:9; Song 3:10). Purple cloth and fabrics were costly (Ezek 27:7, 16) and were commonly worn by kings as a mark of their royal position (Judg 8:26). Thus, this was a sedan-chair fit for a king. KJV and NIV render it simply as "purple," NASB as "purple fabric," and NJPS "purple wool."

7 tn The participle דְּצוֹף, (ratsuf) probably functions verbally: "Its interior was fitted out with love/lovingly." Taking it adjectivally would demand that הַשְׁהַלָּה ('ahavah, "love") function as a predicate nominative and given an unusual metonymical connotation: "Its inlaid interior [was] a [gift of] love."

<sup>8</sup> tn The accusative noun אַהֲבָה ('ahavah, "love" or "leather") functions either as an accusative of material out of which the interior was made ("inlaid with leather") or an accusative of manner describing how the interior was made ("inlaid lovingly," that is, "inlaid with love"). The term אָהַבָּה is a homonymic noun therefore, there is an interesting little debate s.v. II אַהְבָּה "leather" is related to Arabic "ihab "leather" or "untanned skin." It probably occurs in Hos 11:4 and may also appear in Song 3:10 (HALOT 18 s.v. II). Traditionally, scholars and translations have rendered this term as "love" or "lovingly." The reference to the "daughters of Jerusalem" suggests "love" because they had "loved" Solomon (1:4). However, the context describes the materials out of which the palanguin was made (3:9-10) thus, an interior made out of leather would certainly make sense. Perhaps the best solution is to see this as an example of intentional ambiguity in a homonymic wordplay: "Its interior was inlaid with leather // love by the maidens of Jerusalem." See G. R. Driver, "Supposed Arabisms in the Old Testament," JBL 55 (1936): 111; S. E. Loewenstamm, Thesaurus of the Language of the Bible, 1:39; D. Grossberg, "Canticles 3:10 in the Light of a Homeric Analogue and Biblical Poetics," BTB 11 (1981): 75-76.

maidens<sup>1</sup> of Jerusalem.
3:11 Come out, O maidens of Zion, and gaze upon King Solomon!
He is wearing the crown with which his mother crowned him on his wedding day, on the most joyous day of his life!<sup>2</sup>

The Wedding Night: Praise of the Bride<sup>3</sup>

### The Lover to His Beloved:

4:1 Oh, 4 you are beautiful, my darling! 5 Oh, you are beautiful! Your eyes behind your veil are like doves. 6

1 tn Heb "daughters" (also in the following line).

**2 tn** Heb "the day of the joy of his heart." In the genitive construct phrase או רביים שבות שלייה minkhat, "the day of joy") the noun שַּׁבְּיִת his (simkhah, "joy") functions as a descriptive genitive of attribute (attributive genitive), that is, the genitive identifies the outstanding quality of the construct noun: "the joyous day" or "the day characterized by joy." In the second genitive construct phrase  $\frac{1}{2}$  (simkhat livvo, "joy of his heart") the noun ב' ("his heart") is a subjective genitive: "his heart rejoices." The term  $\frac{1}{2}$  (lev, "heart") is a synecdoche of part for the whole (= Solomon himself), that is, "the day Solomon greatly rejoiced" or "the day of Solomon's great joy."

- 3 sn Song 4:1-7 is often compared to ancient Near Eastern wasfs songs sung by the groom to his new bride, praising her beauty from head to foot. Examples have been found in Egyptian, Syrian, Sumerian, and Arabic love literature. The wasfs song is a poetic celebration by the groom of his bride's physical beauty. The typical form has three parts: (1) introductory words by the wedding guests, (2) invitation by the bride to the groom to celebrate her physical beauty, and (3) the groom's poetic comparative praise of his bride's beauty from head to foot - comprising the bulk of the song. The groom's praise typically is characterized by three movements: (1) introductory summary praise of his bride's beauty, (2) lengthy and detailed figurative description of her physical beauty, and (3) concluding summary praise which reiterates the introductory words of the song. Although the introductory words of the wedding guests and the invitation by the bride are absent, the form of the Lover's praise of his bride is identical, as are the types of comparative praise. His song falls into the same three movements: (1) introductory summary praise of his bride's beauty in 4:1a, (2) lengthy and detailed figurative description of her beauty in 4:1b-6, and (3) concluding summary praise in 4:7. See K&D 18:174-76; S. Krauss, "The Archaeological Background of Some Passages in the Song of Songs," JQR 32 (1941-42): 125.
- 4 sn The introductory demonstrative particle תובן (hinneh, "Behold!") is repeated for rhetorical effect. This particle is often used with verbs of seeing or discovering, making the narrative graphic and vivid. It enables the reader to enter into the surprise, wonder, and delight of the speaker (BDB 243 s.v. קוַדְ כ).
- י **sn** The repetition of יְבֶּה רְשְיָתִי (*yafah ra'yati*, "You are beautiful, my darling") in 4:1 and 4:7 forms an inclusion, marking off the song of descriptive praise in 4:1-7.
- 6 sn The expression "your eyes [are] doves" is a metaphor (implied comparison). Like most of the other metaphors in 4:1-7, this is probably a comparison of sight rather than sense: (1) the shape of a woman's eyes, especially in Egyptian art, resemble the shape of a dove, and (2) the white color of the eyeballs resemble the white color of a dove's body. On the other hand, many Jewish and Christian interpreters have suggested that this is a comparison of sense, usually suggesting that the dove is a symbol for purity and that the eyes of a person are the windows of their soul or character, that is, the bride has a pure character as can be seen through her eyes.

Your hair is like a flock of female goats descending<sup>7</sup> from Mount Gilead.
4:2 Your teeth are like a flock of newlyshorn sheep coming up from the washing place;<sup>8</sup> each of them has a twin, and not one of them is missing.
4:3 Your lips are like a scarlet thread;<sup>9</sup> your mouth is lovely. Your forehead<sup>10</sup> behind your veil is like a slice of pomegranate.
4:4 Your neck is like the tower<sup>11</sup> of David built with courses of stones;<sup>12</sup>

- 7 tn Heb "flowing down" or "descending." The verb שַּינְלִשׁ (sheggal\*shu, "flowing down") may be nuanced "descending." The most recent lexicons define שַׁינָ (galash) as "to flow, leap" (DCH 2:357 s.v. שֹיִי); "to hop, move down" (HALOT 195 s.v. בליש); and "to go down, glide down" (E. Klein, Comprehensive Etymological Dictionary of the Hebrew Language, 102). Earlier lexicons suggested the meanings "to sit, sit up, recline" (BDB 167 s.v. שַׁיְבָּיְ). The Hebrew root is probably related to Arabic Jalasa "to go up, to go down, sit up" (HALOT 195).
- \$ tn Alternately, "the watering-hole" or "watering-place." The noun רְּחְצֶּה (rakhtsah) may be nuanced "washing-place" (BDB 934 יב", (רְהְצָּה ) or "watering-hole, watering-place" (HALOT 1221 s.v. רְהְיִבֶּה). The related verb רְהִין (rakhtats) means "to wash, bathe, rinse off" (BDB 934 s.v. רְהִייִר, 'HALOT 1220-21 s.v. היין הוא הוא הוא היין וווי (ורדין אבר). The metaphor describing the beautiful teeth of the bride probably pictures freshly washed sheep rather than freshly watered sheep. He praises his bride's teeth by comparing them to freshly washed sheep. In the ancient Near East it was customary to wash sheep before shearing them. The picture of freshly washed sheep depicts the whiteness of the bride's teeth.
- 9 tn The phrase הומ (khut hashshani, "thread of scarlet") is a genitive construct with the genitive functioning adjectivally. This phrase is used three times in classical Hebrew to denote a scarlet colored "thread" or "cord" (Josh 2:18; Song 4:3; 11 QT 49:3) (HALOT 296-97 s.v. אוד, DCH 3:170-71 s.v. אוד). This is a comparison of sight, describing the color and shape of her lips.
  - 10 tn Alternately, "cheek," or "temple" (see Judg 4:21).
- **11 tn** The term מְבֶּרֶל ( $migg^edal$ , "tower") refers to a military structure, such as a stronghold, arsenal, or defensive tower on the walls of a city (e.g., Judg 8:9, 17; 9:51; 2 Kgs 9:17; 17:9; 18:8; 2 Chr 14:6; 26:15; 27:4; 32:5).
- **12 tn** The feminine noun לְתַלְפִּיוֹת (letalpiyyot) is a hapax legomenon of uncertain etymology. Various attempts have been made to find the origin of this word, but they are all uncertain. LXX εἰς  $\theta$ αλπιωθ (eis thalpi $\overline{o}$ th) simply transliterated the word, taking it as a proper name of a locality (Tel Pivoth). Similarly, Dom Calmet treated תלפיות as a compound word (בָּיוֹת, tal, "hill," and בֵּיוֹת, peyot, "mouths") as a reference to a tower built by David on a height in the valleys of Lebanon. The Talmud suggests that the term refers to Jerusalem as the hill (הֵל) to which all mouths (פַּיוֹת) turn (b.Berakhot 30a). Aquila reads εἰς ἐπάλξεις (eis epalxeis) and Symmachus εἰς ὑψη (eis hupsē), while Vulgate has cum propugnaculis. Ibn "for suspending weapons" ל תל פיות as לתלפיות "for suspending weapons" by taking בַּיוֹת ("mouths" = edge of swords) as a reference to weaponry. This is reflected in several translations: "armoury" (KJV, AV, ASV), "arsenal" (RSV), and "fortress" (JB). The noun may be related to the Arabic root tlp ("to perish") in a metonymical sense: "a cause of perishing," i.e., a weapon. The Hebrew Piel verb תַּלֵּף (tillef) means "to hang up for display," thus NEB suggests that it is derived from Ipy which means "to arrange in courses," i.e., "layered," as a reference to the Bride's layered necklace she wears. The NIV nuances it as "with elegance" and NEB "winding courses." Perles connects תַלְפִּיוֹת to Akkadian *tilpanu* ("bow"), while Haupt connects the word with the Shaphel stem of the Akkadian labu ("to fortify"). Honeyman suggests that לתלפיות is a feminine plural noun of the tagtilat nominal pattern from the root which means "to arrange in courses." HALOT notes that

one thousand shields are hung on it – all shields of valiant warriors. 1

the phrase בְּנִי לְּתְלְפֵּיוֹת (banu letalphyyot) has been rendered in several ways: (1) "built with turrets," (2) "built with siege-towers," (3) "built in rows (of stones)" or "built in terraces." Haupt and Krauss suggest that בַּנִיי לְתַלְפִיוֹת denotes "constructed for siege-towers" or "built for an armory." Honeyman suggests that תַּלְפִּיוֹת is a feminine plural noun with a standard nominative prefix ח and is derived from the verbal root לפא ("to arrange in stones"). Probably, the best solution is to relate this Hebrew root to Akkadian lapu ("to surround, enclose"), Arabic laffa or lifafah ("to envelope"), and Aramaic Ipp and Ip' ("to interlace, entwine, plait"). This is the simplest solution and does not demand emending the text. The preposition  $\stackrel{!}{\cdot}$  ( $l^e$ ) could denote "in respect to" and the colon בַנוי לְתַלְפִיוֹת could be translated "built in rows (of stones)" or "built in terraces." Thus, the phrase "built in rows of stones" refers to the outer walls of a tower built in spiraling rows of stones or built in terraces. This is a comparison of sight: (1) her neck was long and symmetrical or (2) she was wearing a strand of beads or necklaces wrapped around her neck like a tower built in spiraling rows of stones. See P. Haupt, "Heb. talpi'ot, Siege-JBL 38 (1919): 186-88; S. Krauss, "The Archaeological Background of Some Passages in the Song of Songs." JQR 32 (1941-42): 125-29; A. M. Honeyman, "Two Contributions to Canaanite Toponymy," JTS 50 (1949): 51; B. S. J. Isserlin, "Song of Songs IV, 4: An Archaeological Note," PEQ 90 (1958): 59-61; K. Crim, "'Your Neck is Like the Tower of David' (The Meaning of a Simile in Song of Solomon 4:4)," BT 22:2 (1977): 72-74; E. Klein, Comprehensive Etymological Dictionary of the Hebrew Language, 704.

1 tn Scholars debate whether this refers to (1) the interior walls of a tower upon which warriors would hang their shields when not in use or (2) the external upper wall of a military fortress upon which warriors would hang their shields to add to their protection during battle. A few scholars suggest that what is pictured here are the internal walls of the tower and, on the basis of Ezek 27:10-11, posit that in the ancient world there was a practice in which mercenaries, who had joined themselves to a king, would hang their shields upon his fortress wall as a sign of their allegiance. Following Crim, Deere suggests, "the custom of hanging shields on the tower was symbolic of the warriors' allegiance to and valor for a particular king." Crim suggests that the point of comparison of his praise would be something similar to what follows: "Just as the fame of Tyre in Ezek. 27:11 attracted mercenaries, the fame of the tower of David has attracted soldiers to come and enter its service. The shields hanging there show that they have given their allegiance to the tower. Your neck is like that tower. It is so beautiful that it could win the allegiance of a thousand heroic soldiers." We would then translate something like this: "Your neck attracts men as the tower of David attracts warriors. A thousand heroic soldiers would swear allegiance to your beauty." J. S. Deere suggests that the point of the comparison is that the bride's neck was so beautiful and maiestic that mighty warriors from near and far would have given their allegiance to her...It is as if he were saying that these soldiers would be willing to surrender their shields to her beauty. On the other hand, most scholars suggest that it refers to the common practice in the ancient Near East of lining the top wall of a military fortress tower with shields, behind which the soldiers could stand for protection leaving both hands free for bow and arrows (Note: It is possible to view Ezek 27:10-11 and 2 Chr 32:5 in this manner). This is supported by ancient Near Eastern art which pictures such a practice, especially by the relief of Sennacherib's siege of Lachish which shows the top wall of Lachish lined with shields. The Illustrated Family Encyclopedia of the Living Bible, 10:56, notes: "The art of the ancient East often shows us the shields that were, in time of war, set in position on the towers of the city walls, so that defenders could safely fire arrows and hurl stones while standing upright behind them." Those who see this as the imagery all agree that the point of comparison is to jeweled necklaces with pendants which could be compared to shields, as in 1:10-11 (A. Robert, T. J. Meek, G. Gerlemann, A. M. Honeyman, B. S. J. Isserlin, J. McKenzie). McKenzie expresses this

4:5 Your two breasts are like two fawns, twins of the gazelle grazing among the lilies.
4:6 Until the dawn arrives² and the shadows flee, I will go up to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense.
4:7 You are altogether beautiful, my darling!
There is no blemish in you!

The Wedding Night: Beautiful as Lebanon

4:8 Come with me from Lebanon, my bride, come with me from Lebanon.

Descend from the crest of Amana, from the top of Senir, the summit of Hermon, from the lions' dens and the mountain haunts of the leopards.

view when he posits that she was wearing jewelry around her neck and that this was being compared to the shields hung around this military tower: "One of the many physical charms that the Beloved finds in his mistress (Song of Sol. 4:1-4) is her long neck which, with its stately poise, reminds him of the lofty tower of David. Just as this tower is hung all round with shields placed there by mighty men of valor, so is his mistress' neck adorned with chains and strings of jewels. This is supported by the fact that 4:9 explicitly mentions a necklace with a multitude of jewels in it which she was wearing at this time. And Isserlin suggests that the complete image in view fits the evidence of both ancient Near Eastern military towers and jewelry which has been recovered archaeologically: "It seems to the present writer that a reading of the verse...can be taken to refer to the presence not of one, but two elements on the tower: there is the coursed masonry, and on top of it there are the shields. If we keep the idea that a multiple necklace is alluded to, then this should be made up of two kinds of elements: on top there should be a series of beads resembling round shields; below we should find something resembling either the short or the long side of building stones (according to whether the masonry is laid in headers or stretchers). Can necklaces of this type be found in the ancient Near East? It seems to the writer that the well-known sculpture from Arsos in Cyprus (Pl. VI) represents just this type of necklace. The upper beads do look like a row of round shields, as shown on the tower in the relief slab representing Sennacherib's siege of Lachish, while the lower elements do evoke roughly bossed headers, as found in ancient Palestinian defence works" (B. S. J. Isserlin, The Israelites, 59, and plate VI). Composite necklaces such as this one might be referred to in Prov 1:9. In any case, it is quite unlikely that the point of comparison was that she had a large, muscular neck, as some have suggested (M. Jastrow, L. Waterman, and R. Gordis). See A. M. Honeyman, "Two Contributions to Canaanite Toponymy," JTS 50 (1949): 51; B. S. J. Isserlin, "Song of Songs IV, 4: An Archaeological Note," PEQ 90 (1958): 59-61; The Illustrated Family Encyclopedia of the Living Bible, 10:56; K. R. Crim, "Your Neck is Like the Tower of David (The Meaning of a Simile in the Song of Solomon 4:4)," BT 22:2 (April 1977): 70-74.

2 tn Heb "until the day breathes."

**4:9** You have stolen my heart, my sister, my bride!

You have stolen my heart with one glance of your eyes,<sup>3</sup>

with one jewel of your necklace.

**1 tn** The Piel denominative verb לבב is derived from the noun לבב (levav, "heart"), and occurs only here. Its meaning is debated: (1) metonymical sense: "you have encouraged me," that is, given me heart (BDB 525 s.v. לב, AV, RSV); (2) intensive sense: "you have made my heart beat faster" (KBL 471 s.v. לבב ו; and (3) privative sense: "you have ravished my heart" or "you have stolen my heart" (HALOT 515 s.v. ולבב ; GKC 141-42 §52.h) (NIV). While the Niphal stem has a metonymical nuance (cause for effect): to get heart, that is, to get understanding (Job 11:12), the Piel stem may have a privative nuance: to take away heart, that is, to take away the senses. Her beauty was so overwhelming that it robbed him of his senses (e.g., Hos 4:11). This is paralleled by a modern Palestinian love song: "She stood opposite me and deprived me of reason (literally, "took my heart"), your dark eyes slew me while I was singing, your eyebrows drove shame from me...the darkness of your eyes have slain me; O one clad in purple clothes, it is worthwhile falling in love with you, for your eyes are black and sparkle, and have slain me indeed." Less likely is the proposal of Waldeman who relates this to Akkadian lababu ("to rage, be aroused to fury"), suggesting that Song 4:9 means "to become passionately aroused" or "to be aroused sexually." See S. H. Stephan, "Modern Palestinian Parallels to the Song of Songs," JPOS 2 (1922): 13; R. Gordis, Song of Songs and Lamentations, 85-86; N. M. Waldman, "A Note on Canticles 4:9," JBL 89 (1970): 215-17; H. W. Wolff, Anthropology of the Old Testament, 40-58.

2 sn It is clear from Song 8:1 that the young man and his bride were not physical brother and sister, yet he addresses his bride as אַרֹתִי ('akhoti, "my sister") several times (4:9, 10, 12; 5:1). This probably reflects any one of several ancient Near Eastern customs: (1) The appellatives "my sister" and "my brother" were both commonly used in ancient Near Eastern love literature as figurative descriptions of two lovers. For instance, in a Ugaritic poem when Anat tried to seduce Aghat, she says, "Hear, O hero Aghat, you are my brother and I your sister" (Aqhat 18 i. 24). In the OT Apocrypha husband and wife are referred to several times as "brother" and "sister" (Add Esth 15:9; Tob 5:20; 7:16). This "sister-wife" motif might be behind Paul's perplexing statement about a "sister-wife" (1 Cor 9:5). (2) In several Mesopotamian societies husbands actually could legally adopt their wives for a variety of reasons. For instance, in Hurrian society husbands in the upper classes sometimes adopted their wives as "sisters" in order to form the strongest of all possible marriage bonds; a man could divorce his wife but he could not divorce his "sister" because she was "family." At Nuzi a husband could adopt his wife to give her a higher status in society. See M. Held, "A Faithful Lover in Old Babylonian Dialogue," JCS 15 (1961): 1-26 and S. N. Kramer, The Sacred Marriage Rite, 103-5; T. Jacobsen, "The Sister's Message," JANESCU 5 (1973): 199-212; E. A. Speiser, "The Wife-Sister Motif in the Patriarchal Narratives," Oriental and Biblical Studies, 15-28; G. R. Driver, Canaanite Myths and Legends, 111.

**4:10** How delightful is your love, my sister, my bride!

How much better is your love than wine; the fragrance of your perfume is better than any spice!

**4:11** Your lips drip sweetness like the honeycomb, my bride,

honey and milk are under your tongue. The fragrance of your garments is like the fragrance of Lebanon.

The Wedding Night: The Delightful Garden

#### The Lover to His Beloved:

**4:12** You are a locked garden, my sister, my bride;

you are an enclosed spring, a sealed-up fountain.

**4:13** Your shoots are a royal garden<sup>5</sup> full of pomegranates

with choice fruits:

henna with nard,

4:14 nard and saffron;

calamus and cinnamon with every kind of spice,

myrrh and aloes with all the finest spices.<sup>6</sup>

4:15 You are a garden spring,7

ל sn The twin themes of the enclosed garden and sealed spring are highlighted by the wordplay (paronomasia) between the Hebrew expressions נָל נָשל (gan na'ul, "a garden locked up") and נֵל נָשל (gal na'ul, "an enclosed spring").

\$ sn The noun בְּרַבְּים (pardes, "garden, parkland, forest") is a foreign loanword that occurs only 3 times in the Hebrew Bible (Song 4:13; Eccl 2:5; Neh 2:8). The original Old Persian (Avestan) term pairidaeza designated the enclosed parks and pleasure-grounds which were the exclusive domain of the Persian kings and nobility in the Achaemenid period (HALOT 963 s.v. בַּרַבְּט 1308). The Babylonian term pardesu means "marvelous garden," in reference to the enclosed parks of the kings (AHw 2:833.a and 3:1582.a). The term passed into Greek as παραδείσος (paradeisos, "enclosed park, pleasure-ground"), referring to the enclosed parks and gardens of the Persian kings (LSJ 1308). The Greek term was transliterated into English as "paradise."

6 tn Or "with all the finest balsam trees." The Hebrew term ជាមុខ (bosem) can refer either to the balsam tree, the spice associated with it, or by extension any fragrant aroma used as perfuming oil or incense.

7 tn Heb "a fountain of gardens" or "a headwaters for gardens." The term מֶּעְיֵן (m'yan, "fountain") denotes "source, headwaters" as the place of origin of streams (HALOT 612 s.v. מַעֵּין). The term does not refer to a water fountain such as commonly found in modern cultivated gardens or parks; rather, it refers to the headwaters of streams and rivers, such as the headwaters of the Jordan. The genitive construct מַעייַן נגים (m'yan gannim, "a fountain of gardens") is an unusual expression that has been treated in various ways: (1) "a garden fountain," that is, a fountain located in a garden (HALOT 198 s.v. (دٍן:); (2) "a fountain of gardens," that is, the headwaters of many spring-watered gardens. The latter is preferred. In Song 4:12-14 the bride is figuratively described as a garden with exotic plants; however, in 4:15 the metaphor shifts to the source of the water for the garden: מַעָּיַן ("headwaters") and באָר ( $b^{e}$ 'er, "well") of fresh water flowing down from Lebanon.

a well<sup>1</sup> of fresh water<sup>2</sup> flowing down from Lebanon.

#### The Beloved to Her Lover:

**4:16** Awake, O north wind; come, O south wind!

Blow on my garden so that its fragrant spices may send out their sweet smell.<sup>3</sup> May my beloved come into his garden and eat its delightful fruit!

#### The Lover to His Beloved:

**5:1** I have entered my garden, O my sister, my bride;

I have gathered my myrrh with my balsam spice.

I have eaten my honeycomb and my honey;

I have drunk my wine and my milk!

3 tn Heb "may flow."

4 sn There is no little debate about the identity of the speaker(s) and the audience addressed in 5:1b. There are five options: (1) He is addressing his bride. (2) The bride is addressing him. (3) The wedding guests are addressing him and his bride. (4) He and his bride are addressing the wedding guests. (5) The poet is addressing him and his bride. When dealing with this issue, the following factors should be considered: (1) the form of both the exhortations and the addressees are plural. This makes it unlikely that he is addressing his bride or that his bride is addressing him. (2) The exhortation has an implicitly sexual connotation because the motif of "eating" and "drinking" refers to sexual consummation in 5:1a. This makes it unlikely that he or his bride are addressing the wedding guests - an orgy is quite out of the question! (3) The poet could be in view because as the writer who created the Song, only he could have been with them – in a poetic sense - in the bridal chamber as a "guest" on their wedding night. (4) The wedding guests could be in view through the figurative use of apostrophe (addressing an audience that is not in the physical presence of the speaker). While the couple was alone in their wedding chambers, the wedding guests wished them all the joys and marital bliss of the honeymoon. This is supported by several factors: (a) Wedding feasts in the ancient Near East frequently lasted several days and after the couple had consummated their marriage, they would appear again to celebrate a feast with their wedding guests. (b) The structure of the Song is composed of paired-dialogues which either begin or conclude with the words of the friends or daughters of Jerusalem (1:2-4, 5-11; 3:6-11; 5:9-16; 6:1-3, 4-13; 7:1-10) or which conclude with an exhortation addressed to them (2:1-7; 3:1-5; 8:1-4). In this case, the poetic unit of 4:1-5:1 would conclude with an exhortation by the friends in 5:1b.

# The Poet to the Couple:4

Eat, friends, and drink!<sup>5</sup> Drink freely, O lovers!

The Trials of Love: The Beloved's Dream of Losing Her Lover

#### The Beloved about Her Lover:

5:2 I was asleep, but my mind<sup>6</sup> was dreaming.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> th Heb "a watering place" or "well of underground water." The term אָבְּי ( $b^{e^{o}}e^{r}$ , "well") refers to an underground well that is dug in the ground to provide fresh water for humans and beasts (e.g., Gen 21:19, 25, 30; 26:15, 18, 19, 22, 32) (HALOT 106 s.v. אָבֶּי (LALOT 106 s.v. אָבָּי (LALOT 106 s.v. LALOT 287 s.v. LALOT 287 s.v. LALOT 29, LALOT 21, LALOT 2

<sup>2</sup> th Heb "living water." The phrase מַלְּים מְיָּים (mayim khayyim, "living water") refers to flowing, fresh water in contrast to standing, stagnant water (Gen 26:19; Lev 14:5-6, 50-52; 15:13; Num 19:17; Jer 2:13; 17:13; Zech 14:8; Song 4:15; 1QH 8:7, 16; 4Q418 103.2:6; 4QDibHam® 1.5:2; 11QT 45:16) (DCH 3:202 s.v. וֹיִחָ 1; HALOT 308 s.v. יוֹיָח 1; The adjective יוֹיִח ("living") frequently refers to what is fresh (Gen 26:19), healthy (Sir 30:14), or thriving (Gen 43:7, 27). Fresh, flowing water is pictured as pure (Lev 14:5-6, 50-52; 15:13) and a source of refreshment (Gen 26:19). See P. Reymond, L'eau, sa vie, et sa signification dans l'Ancien Testament (VTSup), 136.

<sup>5</sup> sn The physical love between the couple is compared to eating and drinking at a wedding feast. This is an appropriate figure of comparison because it would have been issued during the feast which followed the wedding and the consummation. The term "drink" refers to intoxication, that is, it compares becoming drunk on wine with enjoying the physical love of one's spouse (e.g., Prov 5:19-20).

<sup>\$\\\ \</sup>text{th Heb} \text{"my heart."}\$ The term (livvi, "my heart") is a metonymy of association for emotions (e.g., Prov 15:13; Song 3:11) or thoughts (e.g., Ps 90:12; Prov 18:15) or a synecdoche of part for the whole. If this verse is introducing a dream sequence in 5:2-8, this is a metonymy for the Beloved's thoughts in her dream: "I was sleeping but my mind was dreaming." If this verse depicts the Beloved beginning to doze off to sleep – only to be awakened by his knocking at her door – then it is a synecdoche of part for the whole: "I was about to fall asleep when I was suddenly awakened."

<sup>7</sup> tn Heb "but my heart was awake." Scholars have interpreted 5:2a in two basic ways: (1) The Beloved had been asleep or was just about to fall asleep when she was awakened by the sound of him knocking on the door of her bedroom chambers. The term לְבֵי (livvi, "my heart") is a synecdoche of part for the whole: "my heart" = "I." The participle שר ('er) functions verbally, describing a past ingressive state: "was awakened." The line would be rendered: "I was sleeping when I (= my heart) was awakened." (2) The Beloved was sleeping, but her mind was dreaming (in her dream she heard him knocking on her door). In this case, לְבִי ("my heart") is a metonymy of association for the thoughts (e.g., Ps 90:12; Prov 18:15) and emotions (e.g., Prov 15:13; Song 3:11) she experienced during her dream: "my heart" = "my mind." The participle ער functions verbally, describing a past progressive state: "was awake." The line could be nuanced, "I was asleep, but my mind was dreaming." Many translations adopt this approach: "I was asleep but my heart waketh" (KJV), "I was asleep but my heart was awake" (NASB, NIV), and "I was asleep, but my heart was wakeful" (NJPS).

Listen!<sup>1</sup> My lover<sup>2</sup> is knocking<sup>3</sup> at the

#### The Lover to His Beloved:

"Open<sup>5</sup> for me, my sister, my darling, my dove, my flawless one! My head is drenched with dew. my hair with the dampness of the night."

**1 sn** The noun קול (gol, literally, "sound, noise, voice") is used as an exclamation: "Listen!" or "Hark!" (e.g., Gen 4:10; lsa 13:4; 40:3; 52:8; Jer 3:21; 4:15; 10:22; 31:51; 50:28; 51:54; Mic 6:9; Zeph 1:14; 2:14; Song 2:8; 5:2) (HALOT 1085 s.v. קול 8b; BDB 877 s.v. קול 1.f; Joüon 2:614 §162.e; GKC 467 §146.b). The term often refers to a loud or unexpected sound that arrests the attention of a character in a narrative. The speaker/writer uses it as a rhetorical device to dramatically portray his/her own startled reaction to an unexpected sound that called his/her attention. The Beloved is startled from her sleep by the unexpected sound of him loudly knocking at her bedroom door late at night.

**2 sn** The phrase קול דודי (qol dodi, "Listen! My lover ...!") that introduces this scene in 5:2-8 is the exact same phrase used in 2:8 to introduce the courtship section 2:8-11. In 2:8-11, the Beloved was excited about his unexpected arrival; however, in 5:2-8 she is apathetic about his unexpected approach. One should not miss the dramatic contrast between the Beloved's eagerness to see her lover in 2:8-11 and her apathy about his approach on this evening in 5:2-8. The repetition of קול דודי ("Listen! My lover ...!") in 2:8 and 5:2 is designed to draw out the parallels and contrasts between 2:8-11 and 5:2-8.

3 sn The participle דוֹפַק (dofeq) connotes present progressive or iterative action. The verb לְּבַּק (dafaq, "to knock, pound, beat") occurs only three times in biblical Hebrew, twice in reference to knocking at a door (Judg 19:22; Song 5:2) and once of beating cattle in order to drive them along (Gen 33:13). The Qal stem depicts the normal action of knocking at a door, while the Hitpael denotes a more intensive pounding, e.g., Qal: "to knock at the door" (Song 5:2) and Hitpael: "to beat violently against the door" (Judg 19:22) (HALOT 229 s.v. דֶּבֶּכ, BDB 200 s.v. דָּפָּק). The same connotations are seen in Mishnaic Hebrew, e.g., the verbs דָּבֶּק and דָבָּק ( $d^efaq$ ), "to knock at the door" (Jastrow 317 s.v. דְּפַּק), and the nouns דּוֹפֶּק "door frame (= what someone knocks on), movable tomb stone, and דופקנין ( $dof^eqanin$ , "knockers"; Jastrow 287 s.v. דופקנין). "to open" a door (HALOT 986-87 s.v. החם; BDB 835 s.v. פתח) clearly suggests that he is at the Beloved's bedroom door.

4 tn The phrase "at the door" does not appear in the Hebrew but is supplied in the translation for clarity.

 $^{5}$  tn Heb "Open to me!" Alternately, "Let me in!" The imperatival form of מְּתָּחִי (pitkhi, "to open") connotes a polite, but earnest request. The verb מָּבֶּה (patakh) refers to the action of opening various objects, e.g., sack (Gen 42:27), skin bottle (Judg 4:19), hamper (Exod 2:6), pit (Exod 21:33), mouth of a cave (Josh 10:22), grave (Ezek 37:12, 13), city gates (Neh 13:19; Isa 45:1), gate of a land (Nah 3:13), window (2 Kgs 13:17). When used with the accusative  $\frac{1}{127}$  (*delet*, "door"), it refers to opening a door (e.g., Judg 3:25; 19:27; 1 Sam 3:15; 2 Kgs 9:3, 10; 2 Chr 29:3; Job 31:32) (*HALOT* 986-87 s.v. בתח; BDB 835 s.v. בַּתַח). Although the object בָּתַה ("door") is here omitted, a bedroom door is clearly in mind in 5:2, as indicated by the collocated verb דָּפָּק (dafaq, "to knock on a door") in the preceding line. Translators have often rendered this line woodenly: "Open to me!" (KJV, NASB, NIV); however, NJPS nuances it well: "Let me in!"

sn The three-fold repetition of the verb בָּתָה (patakh, "to open") (Song 5:2, 5, 6) indicates that it is a key word (Leitwort) in this section. While it is clear that the verb describes her action of opening the door of her bedroom chamber in 5:2, some suggest that in 5:5-6 it is used figuratively (hypocatastasis: implied comparison) of the Beloved "opening" her female genitalia for sexual intercourse (but see study notes below).

#### The Beloved to Her Lover:

5:3 "I have already taken off my robe – must I put it on again? I have already washed my feet – must I soil them again?"

5:4 My lover thrust his hand<sup>6</sup> through<sup>7</sup> the

6 tn Possibly a euphemism (double entendre). The term יר (yad, "hand") normally refers simply to the physical hand (HALOT 386 s.v. ויד 1; BDB 388 s.v. זיד 1). There are, however, at least three occasions when יד refers to tall stone pillars (translated "monument" or "pillar"), such as those used in Canaanite fertility-cults in the form of phallic representations (1 Sam 15:12; 2 Sam 18:18; Isa 56:5). It is clearly used as a euphemism for the male copulative organ in Isa 57:8, 10. It is now an established fact that yad is sometimes used as a euphemism for the male sexual organ in Ugaritic literature (e.g., text no. 52:33-35) (UT 1072). The noun יד is also used in the Qumran literature in this sense in a list of penalties for indecent exposure (Manual of Discipline 7:12-15). Thus, several scholars suggest that a subtle double entendre in 5:4-6. The imagery of the man thrusting his "hand" through the "hole" in the door, and the Beloved "opening" to her lover, with her fingers dripped with "myrrh" on the "handles of the lock," might have a double reference to the literal attempt to gain entry to her bedroom and his desire to make love to her. See M. Delcour, "Two Special Meanings of the Word yd in Biblical Hebrew," JSS 12 (1967): 230-40.

7 tn Heb "sent his hand through." Most scholars suggest that it denotes "to send through," that is, "to thrust through" or "to extend through." For example, BDB 1018 s.v. שַלָּח 3.a proposes that שֶׁלֵה + מִן (shalakh + min) means "to stretch out (his hand) from the outside, inward." He was attempting to open the door from the outside by extending his hand inside the door through some kind of latch-opening: "he put in his hand by the opening of the door" (KJV), "he extended his hand through the opening" (NASB), "he thrust his hand through the latch-opening" (NIV). Others, however, suggest that the construction שלח + מו denotes "to withdraw from" (e.g., 1 Kgs 13:4). The preposition מן is taken to mean, not "through," but "away from." Thus, he was withdrawing his hand from the latch-opening, that is, he had given up and was leaving. This approach is adopted by NJPS: "My beloved took his hand off the latch." His departure is clearly stated in 5:6, "I opened [the door] for my beloved, but my beloved had already turned and gone away; my heart sank at his departure!" (see study notes below on 5:6).

8 tn Heb "hole." Probably "latch-hole" or "key-hole," but possibly a euphemism (double entendre). The noun הור (khor, "hole") is used in OT in a literal and metaphorical sense: (1) literal sense: hole bored in the lid of a chest (2 Kgs 12:10); hole in a wall (Ezek 8:7); hole in the ground or cave used as hiding places for men (1 Sam 13:6; 14:11; Isa 42:23); hole in the ground, as the dwelling place of an asp (Isa 11:8); and a hole in a mountain, as the den of lions (Nah 2:13); and (2) figurative sense: hole of an eye (metonymy of association), that is, eye-socket (Zech 14:12) (HALOT 348 s.v. II הוה; BDB 359 s.v. III הר While the meaning of הר in Song 5:4 is clear - "hole" – there is a debate whether it is used in a literal or figurative sense. (1) Literal sense: The lexicons suggest that it denotes "hole of a door, that is, key-hole or latch-opening" (HALOT 348; BDB 359). Most commentators suggest that it refers to a hole bored through the bedroom door to provide access to the latch or lock. The mention in 5:5 of בַּפוֹת הָמֶד נעול (kaffot hamman'ul, "latches of the door-bolt") suggests that the term refers to some kind of opening associated with the latch of the bedroom door. This approach is followed by most translations: "the hole in the door" (JB), "the latch-hole" (NEB), "the latch-opening" (NIV), "the latch-hole" (NEB), "the latch" (RSV, NJPS), and "the opening of the door" (KJV). The assumption that the hole in question was a latch-hole in the door is reflected in Midrash Rabbah: Rabbi Abba ben Kahana said, "Why is the hole of the door mentioned here, seeing that it is a place where vermin swarm?" The situation envisaged by his actions are often depicted thus: In ancient Near East-

# and my feelings1 were stirred2 for him.

ern villages, the bolting systems of doors utilized door-bolts and keys made of wood. The keys were often stored either on the outside (!) or inside of the door. If the key was placed on the inside of the door, a small hole was bored through the door so that a person could reach through the hole with the key to unlock the door. The key was often over a foot in length, and the keyhole large enough for a man's hand. Apparently, he extended his hand through the hole from the outside to try to unbolt the door latch on the inside. He could put his hand through the hole, but could not open the door without the key. (2) Figurative sense: Because of the presence of several erotic motifs in 5:2-8 and the possibility that a double entendre is present (see notes below), several scholars suggest that the term is a euphemism for the female vagina (HALOT 348). They suggest that in ("hole") is the female counterpart for the euphemistic usage of יני ("hand") in 5:4. See A. S. Cook, The Root of the Thing: A Study of Job and the Song of Songs, 110, 123; Cheryl Exum, "A Literary and Structural Analysis of the Song of Songs," ZAW 85 (1973): 50-51; M. H. Pope, Song of Songs (AB), 518-19.

1 tn Heb "my inward parts," "my intestines," or "my bow-els." Alternately, "my feelings" or "my emotions." The term מעה (me'eh) is used of the internal organs in general ("inward parts") (e.g., 2 Sam 20:10; 2 Chr 21:15, 18; Pss 22:14; 40:9) or the digestive organs in particular ("intestines, bowels, stomach") (e.g., Num 5:22; Job 20:14; Ezek 3:3; 7:19; Jonah 2:1-2). It is frequently used as a metonymy of adjunct for the emotions which Hebrew psychology associated with these internal organs (see H. W. Wolff, Anthropology of the Old Testament, 63-66). These include pity (Isa 16:11), lamentation (Jer 48:36), distress (Jer 4:19; Lam 1:20; 2:11), and compassion (Isa 63:15; Jer 31:20) (HALOT 610-11 s.v. מֵעֶה 3; BDB 589 s.v. סעה 5). Most scholars suggest that the Beloved's feelings of love were revived - a reversal of her feelings of indifference and apathy in 5:3. This is reflected in many translations which use equivalent English idioms: "the core of my being" (JB) and "my heart" (NIV, NJPS) over the woodenly literal "my bowels" (KJV, NEB, AV). On the other hand, the term is also used to refer to the procreative organs, both male (e.g., Gen 15:4; 2 Sam 7:12; 16:11; Isa 48:19; 2 Chr 32:21) and female (e.g., Gen 25:23; Ruth 1:11; Ps 71:6; Isa 49:1). NASB well renders the line, "my feelings were aroused for him" (NASB).

2 tn The exact meaning of this Hebrew verb is uncertain. The exact connotation of the verb המו (hamu) in 5:4 is debated. The verb הָּמָה (hamah, "to murmur, growl, roar, be boisterous") is related to the noun המון (hamon, "sound, murmur, roar, noisy crowd"), הַּמֵיָה (hemyah, "sound, music"), and perhaps even הְּמֶלֶה (hamulah, "noise, noisy crowd, crowd"). The Hebrew root המה is related to Aramaic המא ("to roar; to be agitated"). The Hebrew verb הַמָּה has a basic two-fold range of meanings: (1) literal: "to make a noise" of some kind and (2) figurative: "to be in commotion, uproar" (e.g., often associated with noise or a noisy crowd). The lexicons suggest six distinct categories: (1) "to make a noise" or "to be in commotion," particularly by a tumultuous crowd (1 Kgs 1:41; Pss 39:7; 46:7; Prov 1:21; Is 22:2; Mic 2:12); (2) "to roar," of the sea and sea-waves (Isa 17:12; 51:15; Jer 5:22; 6:23; 31:35; 50:42; 51:55; Ps 46:4); (3) "to make a sound," e.g., bear growling (Isa 59:11), dog barking (Ps 59:7, 15), bird chirping (Ps 102:8), dove cooing (Ezek 7:16); (4) "to moan," (Ps 39:7; 55:18; Prov 1:21; Lam 2:18; Ezek 7:16; Zech 9:15); (5) "to be turbulent, boisterous" (Prov 7:11; 9:13; 20:1; Zech 9:5); and (6) figuratively of the internal organs: "to murmur, be restless, be turbulent," used in reference to pity (Isa 16:11; Jer 4:19; 31:20; 48:36), discouragement (Pss 42:6, 12 HT [42:5, 11 ET]; 43:5), and murmuring in prayer (Pss 55:18; 77:4) (HALOT 250 s.v. ממה, BDB 242 s.v. המה, HALOT suggests "to be turbulent" for Song 5:4 (HALOT 250 s.v. 4), while BDB suggests "the thrill of deep-felt compassion or sympathy" (BDB 242 s.v. 2). Commentators offer a spectrum of opinions from the Beloved feeling agitation, pity, compassion, sexual arousal, or a revival of her love for him. A survey of the translations reveals the same lack of consensus: "my bowels were moved for him" (KJV), "my bowels stirred within me" (NEB), "my heart was thrilled within me" (RSV), "I trembled to the core of my

5:5 I arose to open for my beloved; my hands dripped with myrrh – my fingers flowed with myrrh on the handles of the lock.
5:6 I opened for my beloved, but my lover had already turned³ and gone away.⁴
I fell into despair⁵ when he departed.⁶

being" (JB), "my heart trembled within me" (NAB), "my heart was stirred for him" (JPS, NJPS), "my feelings were aroused for him" (NASB), and "my heart began to pound for him" (NIV). While the precise meaning may never be agreed upon, whatever she was feeling she roused herself from her indifferent apathetic inactivity to arise and open for her beloved in 5:5. The phrase is used similarly elsewhere in OT, rousing the subject to irresistible action (Jer 4:19). The simplest course of action is to nuance this term metonymically (cause for effect), e.g., "my feelings were stirred up for him."

3 tn The verb กุตุลุ (khamaq) occurs only in Song 5:6 (Qal: "to turn away, go leave") and in Jer 31:22 (Hitpael: "to turn hither and thither") (HALOT 330 s.v. กุตุลุ BDB 330 s.v. กุตุลุ). It is related to the noun กุตกุล ("curve, curved lines" of a woman's hips) which appears only in Song 7:2. This root does not appear in Mishnaic Hebrew nor has it yet been attested in any cognate language. However, it was understood in this sense by LXX  $\pi\alpha\rho\tilde{\eta}\lambda\theta v$  ( $par\bar{e}lthen$ , "he turned aside"), and also handled in a similar manner in Aquila, Symmachus, Peshitta, and Vulgate.

4 tn The verbs אָבֶּק עֶּבֶּל (khamaq 'avar, "he turned away, he went away") may form a verbal hendiadys. Normally, the first verb will function as an adverb modifying the second which functions in its full verbal sense. Each functions as a perfect of recent past perfect action, describing a past event that took place shortly before another past event: "I opened [past action] for my beloved, but my lover had already turned and gone away [past perfect action]."

\$\text{fn Heb}\$ "my soul went out." The term נְּפְשׁ, (nafshi, "my soul") is a synecdoche of part for the whole person. The term שֵּׁשֶׁ, (nefesh, "soul") is used over 150 times as a metonymy of association with feelings: sorrow and distress, joy, love, desire, passion, hatred, loathing, avarice (HALOT 713 s.v. שֵּשָׁ אָנ BDB 660 s.v. שֵּׁשֵׁ הַשָּׁ חַלְּיִי אַפְּרָשׁ (nafshi yats'ah, literally, "my soul went out") is a Hebrew idiom connoting great despair (e.g., Gen 35:18; Jer 15:9). The phrase is well rendered by NIV: "my heart sank at his departure." Verses 6-7 clearly indicate that the Beloved fell into despair when he had departed: She searched desperately for him, but could not find him; she called for him, but he did not answer.

<sup>6</sup> tn Alternately, "spoke." Traditionally, the term בדברו  $(b^e dabb^e ro)$  has been related to the common root דבר (davar, "to speak") which occurs nearly 1150 times in verbal forms and nearly 1500 times as a noun. This approach is seen as early as the LXX (although the LXX treated דַבֶּר as a noun rather than an infinitive construct because it was working with an unpointed text): ἐν λογῷ αὐτοῦ (en logō autou, "in his word"). Although they differ on whether the preposition =  $(b^e)$  is temporal ("when") or respect ("at"), many translations adopt the same basic approach as the LXX: "when he spake" (KJV), "as he spoke" (NASB), "when he spoke" (NIV margin), 'at what he said" (JPS, NJPS). However, many recent scholars relate בַבַּברוֹ to the homonymic root בַבַברוֹ ("to turn away, depart") which is related to Akkadian dabaru D "to go away," Dt "to drive away, push back" (CAD 3:186ff), and Arabic dabara "to turn one's back, be behind, depart, retreat" (HALOT 209 s.v. II דבר). Several examples of this root have been found (Pss 18:48; 47:4; 56:6; 75:6; 116:10; 127:5; 2 Chr 22:10; Job 19:18; Song 5:6; Isa 32:7) (HALOT 209-10 s.v. I). Several recent translations take this approach: "when he turned his back" (NEB), "at his flight" (JB), and "at his departure" (NIV). This makes better sense contextually (Solomon did not say anything after 5:2a), and it provides a tighter parallelism with the preceding line that also describes his departure: "My beloved had turned away (הָמֵק, khamaq); he was gone (עֶבַר, khamaq) 'avar)" (NIV).

I looked for him but did not find him; I called him but he did not answer me. 5:7 The watchmen found me as they made their rounds in the city.

They beat me, they bruised me; they took away my cloak, those watchmen on the walls!

The Triumph of Love: The Beloved Praises Her Lover

#### The Beloved to the Maidens:

**5:8** O maidens of Jerusalem, I command you –

If you find my beloved, what will you tell him?

Tell him that I am lovesick!1

#### The Maidens to The Beloved:

5:9 Why is your beloved better than others,<sup>2</sup>

O most beautiful of women? Why is your beloved better than others, that you would command us in this manner?

#### The Beloved to the Maidens:

5:10 My beloved<sup>3</sup> is dazzling<sup>4</sup> and ruddy;<sup>5</sup>

**1 tn** The genitive construct הְּלֵּתְ אַהְרָּה (kholat 'ahavah, "sick of love") denotes "lovesick." This is an example of a genitive of cause, that is, the Beloved was (physically/emotionally) sick because of her unrequited love for him. See study note on Song 2:5.

he stands out<sup>6</sup> in comparison to<sup>7</sup> all other men.<sup>8</sup>

5:11 His head is like the purest gold.<sup>9</sup> His hair is curly<sup>10</sup> – black like a raven.
5:12 His eyes are like doves by streams of

5:12 His eyes are like doves by streams of water,

washed in milk, mounted like jewels. **5:13** His cheeks are like garden beds full of

- פ tn Heb "outstanding." The participle דְּנוּל (dagul) functions as a predicate adjective: "My beloved is...outstanding among ten thousand." The verb יבִין (dagal) is relatively rare, being derived from the noun ליבן (degel, "banner") which often refers to a military standard which, when lifted up, was conspicuous for all to see (Num 2:3-4; 10:14-15). The verb יבָיל only occurs three other times, all referring to raising military banners for all to see (Ps 20:6; Song 6:4, 10). Song 5:10 uses the term figuratively (hypocatastasis) to denote "outstanding" (HALOT 213 s.v. יבָיל). This sense is closely related to the cognate Akkadian verb dagalu "to look, contemplate" and the noun diglu "eyesight, view (what is looked at)." Like a banner lifted high, he attracted the attention of all who looked at him.
- 7 tn Heb "from, among." The preposition בן (min) prefixed to הַבְּיִלְי (לְצִּימִימּלְה, "ten thousand") is taken in a comparative, locative sense: "outstanding among ten thousand" (e.g., KJV, RSV, NASB, NIV, NJPS).
- 8 tn Heb "among ten thousand." The numeral "ten thousand" is the highest number used in comparisons in Hebrew poetry (1 Sam 18:7-8; 21:12; 29:5; Ps 91:7). It is not used to mark out a specific number, but to denote an indefinite number of persons of the largest possible proportions (Gen 24:60; Num 10:36; Deut 33:2; Ps 3:7). Her point is simply this: no other man could possibly compare to him in appearance, even if he were in a group of an infinite number of men.
- 9 tn Heb "his head is gold of pure gold." In the genitive construct phrase שָּבְּי (ketem paz, literally, "gold of pure gold") the genitive noon בְּּ (paz, "pure gold") functions as an adjectival genitive modifying בַּיֶּבו ("gold"), that is, "pure gold." The repetition of two different words for "gold" suggests that the phrase should be nuanced "the purest gold." This phrase is a predicate nominate in a metaphorical statement: "his head is (like) the purest gold." In the OT gold is frequently used in comparisons to emphasize the idea of beauty, value, or rarity (Job 28:12-19; Pss 19:11; 119:127; Prov 8:19; Isa 13:12; Lam 4:2). Palestine had no known sources of gold, but had to import it, making it a rare and precious commodity (Ruth V. Wright and R. L. Chadbourne, The Gems and Minerals of the Bible, 65).
- 10 tn Literally "his locks [of hair] are curls." The Hebrew adjective תַּלְּחָל (taltal) is a hapax legomenon whose meaning is somewhat unclear. BDB suggests that הַלְּחָל is from the root לֹאָם ("mound, heap"; BDB 1068 s.v. ו לַאָּחָל ) which is related to Arabic tl "mound, hill, top" (E. W. Lane, Arabic-English Dictionary, 311) and Akkadian tilu "hill, mound" (AHw 3:1358). On the other hand, HALOT suggests that the means "date-panicle" and that it is related to the Akkadian noun taltallu "pollen of date-palm" (HALOT 1741 s.v. בַּלְחֶל הַל (Jastrow 1674 s.v. הַלְּהֶל הוֹל (Jastrow 1674 s.v. הַלְּהֶל is used in the same way in the Song. The form titl is a reduplicated pattern used for adjectives denoting an intense characteristic (S. Moscati, Comparative Grammar, 78-79, §12.9-13). It functions as a predicate adjective to the subjective nominative יבְּיצוֹהְצִי (qutsotav, "his locks of hair").

<sup>2</sup> tn Heb "How is your beloved [better] than [another] lover?"

<sup>3</sup> sn The Beloved's praise of his appearance follows the typical literary structure of the ancient Near Eastern wasfs song: (1) introductory summary praise (5:10), (2) detailed descriptive praise from head to foot (5:11-16a), and (3) concluding summary praise (5:16b). There are several striking features about this song that are unique from the typical wasfs. (1) The ordinary setting of the ancient Near Eastern wasfs songs was the wedding night. (2) They were ordinarily sung only by a man in praise of his bride. (3) Normally, the wasfs song will conclude with the feet after the legs; however, the Beloved concludes by praising his mouth after his legs.

<sup>4</sup> sn The term אַר (tsakh, "dazzling") is ordinarily used to describe the shining surface of jewelry or of smoothed rocks (Ezek 24:7-8; 26:4, 14; Neh 4:7). Likewise, אַראַ ('adom, "ruddy") can describe the redness of rubies (Lam 4:7). Throughout 5:11-15 she compares his appearance to valuable jewels, gems, and precious metals.

<sup>5</sup> tn The adjective אַרָּה ('adom) denotes either "manly" or "ruddy," depending upon whether it is derived from אָרָה ('adam, "man"; HALOT 14 s.v. ו אָרָה) or אַרָּה ("red"; HALOT 14 s.v. ו אָרָה). If it is "manly," the idea is that he is the epitome of masculinity and virility. On the other hand, the emphasis would be upon his health and virility, evidenced by his ruddy complexion, or it could be a comparison between his ruddy coloring and the redness of rubies (Lam 4:7).

balsam trees<sup>1</sup> yielding<sup>2</sup> perfume. His lips are like lilies dripping with drops of myrrh.

**5:14** His arms are like rods of gold set with chrysolite.

His abdomen<sup>3</sup> is like polished ivory inlaid with sapphires.

**5:15** His legs are like pillars of marble set on bases of pure gold.

His appearance is like Lebanon, choice as its cedars.

5:16 His mouth is very sweet;<sup>4</sup> he is totally desirable.<sup>5</sup>

1 sn In the genitive construct phrase י ערונה הבשם (arugat havvosem, literally, "beds of balsam") the term נאספים, (bosem) is a genitive of composition, identifying what these gardens were composed of. The term ייש ("garden-beds") refers to a private garden terrace or garden bed, a rare luxury in Palestine and very expensive to own (Ezek 17:7, 10) (BDB 788 s.v. (שֵרונָה bosem, "balsam") refers to balsam trees which yielded sweet-smelling oils from which perfumes were produced. The balsam trees should be identified either as Astragalus tragacantha which grew everywhere in Palestine and exude resin from its thorns, or as Commiphora opobalsamum which was not native to Israel but to South Arabia from whence it had to be imported at great cost (2 Chr 9:1) (Fauna and Flora of the Bible, 177-78). She is comparing the beautiful scent of his cologned cheeks to fragrant beds of spice.

2 tn Alternately, "towers of perfume." The MT reads מגדלות (migdelot) which yields the awkward "towers of perfume." The term מָגְרָל (migdal, "tower") is normally used in reference to (1) watch-towers, defended towers along the city wall, and individual towers in the countryside to protect the borders, (2) storehouses, and (3) a tower in a vineyard (HALOT 543-44 s.v. I מְּגְּדֵל). It is never used in OT in association with a flower garden. On the other hand, LXX reads φυουσαι (phuousai, "yielding") which reflects an alternate vocalization tradition of מְגַדְּלוֹת ( $m^e$ gad $d^e$ lot; Piel participle feminine plural from גָּדַל, gadal, "to increase, produce"). This makes good sense contextually because the Piel stem of נְדֵל means "to grow" plants and trees (Isa 44:14; Ezek 31:4; Jonah 4:10) (HALOT 179 s.v. ברל 1). This revocalization is suggested by BHS editors, as well as the Hebrew lexicographers (HALOT 544 s.v. 2; 179 s.v. ו 2; BDB 152 s.v. נְדֵל 1). Several translations follow LXX and revocalize the text (RSV, NIV, NJPS margin): "His cheeks are like beds of spice yielding perfume" (NIV) and "His cheeks are like beds of spice producing perfume" (NJPS margin). The other translations struggle to make sense of the MT, but are forced to abandon a literal rendering of מַנְּדֶּלוֹת ("towers"): "banks sweet herbs" (ASV), "banks sweetly scented" (JB), "treasure-chambers full of perfume" (NEB), "banks of sweet scented herbs" (NASB), and "banks of perfume" (JPS, NJPS).

**3 th** The term nps (me'eh) is used in reference to several things in the Old Testament: (1) the womb of a woman (Gen 25:23; Isa 49:1; Ps 71:6; Ruth 1:11), (2) a man's loins (Gen 15:4; 2 Sam 7:12; Isa 48:19; 2 Chr 32:21), (3) the "inward parts" of a person, such as the stomach or intestines which are used to digest food (Num 5:22; Job 20:14; Ezek 3:3; Jonah 2:1-2), and (4) the external stomach or abdominal muscles: "abdomen" (Song 5:14).

4 th Heb "sweetnesses." Alternately, "very delicious." The term מְּלְהַקִּים (mamtaqqim, "sweetness"; HALOT 596 s.v. שְׁלְהַקִּים is the plural form of the noun מְּלֶהְתָּלְים of intensity, that is, "very sweet" (e.g., IBHS 122 §7.4.3a). The rhetorical use of the plural is indicated by the fact that בּיְבְּיִהְעָּה ("sweetness") is functioning as a predicate nominative relative to the singular subjective nominative \(\frac{1}{2}\) (khikko, "his mouth").

ל tn The term בְּּיִבְּעְּדִים (makhmaddim, "desirable") is the plural form of the noun בְּיבַעְּדִים (makhmad, "desire, desirable thing, precious object", HALOT 570 s.v. בְּיבָרִים 1, BDB 326 s.v. בְּיבָּעִים בּוֹנִים ("sweetness") in the preceding parallel line, this use of the plural is probably an example of the plural

This is my beloved!
This is my companion, O maidens of
Jerusalem!

The Lost Lover Found

#### The Maidens to the Beloved:

6:1 Where has your beloved gone, O most beautiful among women? Where has your beloved turned? Tell us,<sup>6</sup> that we may seek him with you.<sup>7</sup>

#### The Beloved to the Maidens:

6:2 My beloved has gone down to his garden, 8 to the flowerbeds of balsam spices, 9 to graze<sup>10</sup> in the gardens, and to gather lilies. 11

of intensity: "very desirable."

<sup>6</sup> tn The phrase "Tell us!" does not appear in the Hebrew but is supplied in the translation for the sake of smoothness.

**7 tn** Heb "And we may seek him with you." The vav-conjunctive on יְּבֶּבְּלְשֶׁנוּ ( $un^e$ vaqshennu, "and we may seek him with you") denotes purpose/result.

\*\* sn The term  $\frac{1}{12}$  (gan, "garden") is used six other times in the Song. In five cases, it is used figuratively (hypocatastasis) to describe her body or the sexual love of the couple (4:12, 15, 16a, 16b; 5:1). There is only one usage in which it might refer to a real garden (8:13). Thus, this usage of "garden" might be figurative or literal: (1) He went to a real garden for repose. Solomon did, in fact, own a great many gardens (Eccl 2:4-7; 1 Chr 27:27). (2) The "garden" is a figurative description referring either to: (a) the young woman, (b) their sexual love, or (c) Solomon's harem.

9 sn The phrase נְצֶרוֹנֶת הַבֹּשֶׁם (ka'anugat havvosem, "flowerbeds of balsam") is used elsewhere in the Song only in 5:13 where it is a simile comparing his cheeks to a flower-bed of balsam yielding perfumed spices. The term בַּשֶּׁם ("balsam-spice") by itself appears five times in the Song, each time as a figure for sexual love (4:10, 14, 16; 5:1; 8:14). Thus, the two options are: (1) the term refers to a real flower-bed of balsam to which Solomon had gone or (2) this term is a figure for sexual love.

**10 tn** The verb לרעות (lir'ot, "to browse"; so NAB, NIV) is from the root רַעָּה (ra'ah, "to feed, graze") which is used seven times in the Song (1:7, 8a, 8b; 2:16; 4:5; 6:2, 3). All its uses appear to be either literal or figurative descriptions of sheep grazing. The verb is used twice in reference to sheep "grazing" in a pasture (1:7, 8). The participle is used once to designate "shepherds" (1:8), once in reference to two fawns which "which graze among the lilies" as a figurative description of her breasts (4:5), and twice as a figurative description of Solomon as "the one who grazes among the lilies" which is probably also a comparison of Solomon to a grazing sheep (2:16; 6:3). Therefore, it is likely that the usage of the term לרעות ("to graze") in 6:2 is also a figurative comparison of Solomon to a sheep grazing among garden flowers. Thus, there are two options: (1) nuance the term לרעות as "to browse" (NAB, NIV) and take this as a literal action of Solomon walking through a real garden or (2) nuance the term לְרָעוֹת as "to graze" (NLT) and take this as a figure in which Solomon is pictured as a gazelle grazing on the flowers in a garden.

שוֹשֵנֵים (shoshannah, "lilies") or שׁוֹשֵנֵים (shoshannah, "lilies") appears eight times in the Song (2:1, 2, 16; 4:5; 5:13; 6:2, 3; 7:2). Of these five are unequivocally used figuratively as descriptions of a woman or women (2:1, 2), the color and softness of her breasts (4:5), the attractiveness of his lips (5:13), and her waist (7:2). The closest parallel to 6:2 is the description "the one who grazes among the lilies" (2:16; 6:3) which is a figurative expression comparing his romancing of his Beloved with a sheep feeding on lilies. However, this still leaves a question as to what the lilies represent in 2:16; 6:2, 3. The phrase "to gather lilies" itself appears only

Poetic Refrain: Mutual Possession

# The Beloved about Her Lover:

6:3 I am my lover's and my lover is mine; he grazes among the lilies.

The Renewal of Love

#### The Lover to His Beloved:

6:4 My darling, you are as beautiful as Tirzah,<sup>3</sup> as lovely as Jerusalem,<sup>4</sup> as awe-inspiring<sup>5</sup> as bannered armies!

here in the Song. However, the synonymous phrase "to gather myrrh and balsam spice" is used in 5:1 as a figure (euphemistic hypocatastasis) for sexual consummation by the man of the woman. There are three basic options as to how "lilies" may be taken: (1) The lilies are real flowers; he has gone to a real garden in which to repose and she is picking real lilies. (2) The term "lilies" is a figure for the young woman; he is romancing her just as he had in 2:16 and 5:1. He is kissing her mouth just as a sheep would graze among lilies. (3) The term "lilies" is a figure expression referring to other women, such as his harem (e.g., 6:8-9). Two factors support the "harem" interpretation: (1) Solomon had recently departed from her, and she was desperate to find him after she refused him. (2) His harem is mentioned explicitly in 6:8-9. However, several other factors support the Beloved interpretation: (1) She expresses her confidence in 6:3 that he is devoted to her. (2) The immediately following use of "lilies" in 6:3 appears to refer to her, as in 2:16 and 5:1. (3) He praises her in 6:4-7, suggesting that he was romancing her in 6:2-3. (4) Although his harem is mentioned in 6:8-10, all these women acknowledge that he is disinterested in them and only loves her. (5) Her exultation "I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine; the one who grazes among the lilies" (6:3) is a statement of assurance in their relationship and this would seem quite strange if he was cavorting with his harem while she said this.

- 1 sn This is the second occurrence of the poetic refrain that occurs elsewhere in 2:16 and 7:11. The order of the first two cola are reversed from 2:16: "My beloved is mine and I am his" (2:16) but "I am my beloved's and he is mine" (6:3). The significance of this shift depends on whether the parallelism is synonymous or climactic. This might merely be a literary variation with no rhetorical significance. On the other hand, it might signal a shift in her view of their relationship: Originally, she focused on her possession of him, now she focused on his possession of her.
- 2 tn Or "I belong to my beloved, and my lover belongs to me." Alternately, "I am devoted to my beloved, and my lover is devoted to me."
- 3 tn He compares her beauty to two of the most beautiful and important cities in the Israelite United Kingdom, namely, Jerusalem and Tirzah. The beauty of Jerusalem was legendary; it is twice called "the perfection of beauty" (Ps 50:2; Lam 2:15). Tirzah was beautiful as well in fact, the name means "pleasure, beauty." So beautiful was Tirzah that it would be chosen by Jeroboam as the original capital of the northern kingdom (1 Kgs 15:33; 16:8, 15, 23). The ancient city Tirzah has been identified as Tel el-Far`ah near Nablus: see B. S. J. Isserlin, "Song of Songs IV, 4: An Archaeological Note," PEQ 90 (1958): 60; R. de Vaux, "Le premiere campagne de fouilles a Tell el-Far`ah," RB 54 (1947): 394-433.
- 4 map For location see Map5-B1; Map6-F3; Map7-E2; Map8-F2; Map10-B3; JP1-F4; JP2-F4; JP3-F4; JP4-F4.

6:5 Turn your eyes away from me they overwhelm6 me! Your hair is like a flock of goats descending from Mount Gilead. **6:6** Your teeth are like a flock of sheep coming up from the washing; each has its twin; not one of them is missing. **6:7** Like a slice of pomegranate is your forehead behind your veil. 6:8 There may be sixty<sup>8</sup> queens, and eighty concubines, and young women<sup>9</sup> without number. 6:9 But she is unique!10 My dove, my perfect one! She is the special daughter<sup>11</sup> of her mother,

cates that he had forgiven any ingratitude on her part.

- 6 tn The verb רֶהְבּׁל (rahav) should be nuanced "overwhelm" or "arouse" rather than "storm against," "make proud," "confuse," "dazzle," or "overcome" (BDB 923 s.v. הָהַבּ).
  - 7 tn Alternately, "your cheeks" or "your temple." See 4:3.
- 8 sn The sequence "sixty...eighty...without number" is an example of a graded numerical sequence and is not intended to be an exact numeration (see W. G. E. Watson, Classical Hebrew Poetry [JSOTSup], 144-50).
- **9 sn** The term עַלְמָה ('almah, "young woman") refers to a young woman who is of marriageable age or a newly married young woman, usually before the birth of her first child (HALOT (e.g., Gen 24:43; Exod (עֵלְמָה BDB 761 s.v. עֵלְמָה) (e.g., Gen 24:43; Exod 2:8; Ps 68:26; Prov 30:19; Song 1:3; 6:8; Isa 7:14). The only other use of the term "young women" (שֵלְמוֹת) in the Song refers to the young women of Solomon's harem (Song 6:8). The root עלם denotes the basic idea of "youthful, strong, passionate" (HALOT 835 s.v. III). While the term עַלְמָה may be used in reference to a young woman who is a virgin, the term itself does not explicitly denote "virgin." The Hebrew term which explicitly denotes "virgin" בְּתִּילָה ( $b^e$ tulah) which refers to a mature young woman without any sexual experience with men (e.g., Gen 24:16; Exod 22:15-16; Lev 21:3; Deut 22:23, 28; 32:25; Judg 12:12; 19:24; 2 Sam 13:2, 18; 1 Kgs 1:2; 2 Chr 36:17; Esth 2:2-3, 17, 19; Job 31:1; Pss 45:15; 78:63; 148:12; Isa 23:4; 62:5; Jer 2:32; 31:3; 51:22; Lam 1:4, 18; 2:10, 21; 5:11; Ezek 9:6; Joel 1:8; Amos 9:13; Zech 9:17; HALOT 166-7 s.v. בְּתוּלְה BDB 143 s.v. בְּתוּלָה. The related noun בתולים ( $b^e tulim$ ) means "state of virginity" (Lev 21:13; Judg 11:37-38; Ezek 23:3, 8; Sir 42:10) and "evidence of virginity" (Deut 22:14-15, 17, 20) (HALOT 167 s.v. בְּתוּלִים).
- 10 th Alternately, "She alone is my dove, my perfect one." The term אָרֵה ('akhat) is used here as an adjective of quality: "unique, singular, the only one" (DCH 1:180 s.v. בול אַרֶּד 1b). The masculine form is used elsewhere to describe Yahweh as the "only" or "unique" God of Israel who demands exclusive love and loyalty (Deut 6:4; Zech 14:9). Although Solomon possessed a large harem, she was the only woman for him.
- 11 th Heb "the only daughter of her mother." The phrase אַרָת לְּאַבֶּּעְהַ ('akhat le'immah) is sometimes translated as "the only daughter of her mother" (NIV, NASB) or "the only one of her mother" (KUV). K&D 18:112 suggests that she was not her mother's only daughter, but her most special daughter. This is supported by the parallelism with בְּרָה (barah, "favorite") in the following line. Similarly, Gen 22:2 and Prov 4:3 use the masculine term אַרָּה ('ekhad, "the only one") to refer to the specially favored son, that is, the heir.

she is the favorite<sup>1</sup> of the one who bore her. The maidens<sup>2</sup> saw her and complimented her;<sup>3</sup>

the queens and concubines praised her: 6:10 "Who<sup>4</sup> is this who appears<sup>5</sup> like the dawn?<sup>6</sup>

Beautiful as the moon, bright as the sun,

ל tn The term בְּרָה (barah) is sometimes nuanced "pure" (NASB) because the root רבר I denotes "to purify, purge out" (BDB 140-41 s.v. -). However, the root רזם also denotes "to choose, select" (BDB 141 s.v. 2) (Neh 5:1.8; 1 Chr 7:40, 9:22; 16:41). Most translations adopt the second root, e.g., "the choice one" (KJV), "the favorite" (NIV), "favorite" (JB). This is supported by the exegetical tradition of LXX, which translates  $\alpha$  as <code>kkkkt</code> (<code>eklekte</code>, "the chosen one").

<sup>2</sup> tn Heb "daughters."

3 th Heb "to call blessed." The verb אָשֶׁר ('ashar) is used of people whom others consider fortunate because they have prospered or are to be commended (Gen 30:13; Ps 72:17; Mal 3:12, 15). Likewise, the verb לְּיִלְה (halal, "to praise") is used elsewhere of people who are held in high esteem by others either due to a commendable moral quality (Prov 31:28, 31) or due to one's physical beauty (Gen 12:15; 2 Sam 14:25). The actual content of their praise of her appears in Song 6:10 in which they compare her beauty to that of the dawn, moon, sun, and stars.

4 sn This rhetorical question emphasizes her position among women (e.g., Mic 2:7; Joel 2:1).

5 tn Alternately, "rises" or "looks forth." Delitzsch renders הַנְּשֶׁקְבָּה (hannishqafah) as "who rises," while NIV opts for "who appears." The verb means "to look down upon [something] from a height" and is derived from the related noun "ceiling, roof, sky" (BDB 1054 s.v. אָשֶׁרֶּף; HALOT 1645 s.v. שַּקָּף). The verb is used of looking down over a plain or valley from the vantage point of a mountain-top (Num 21:20; 23:28; 1 Sam 13:18); of God looking down from heaven (Ps 14:2); or of a person looking down below out of an upper window (Judg 5:28; 2 Sam 6:16; Prov 7:6). M. H. Pope (The Song of Songs [AB], 571-72) suggests that this verb implies the idea of her superiority over the other women, that is, she occupies a "higher" position over them due to his choice of her. But another interpretation is possible: The verb creates personification (i.e., the dawn is attributed with the human action of looking). Just as the dawn is the focus of attention during the morning hours and looks down upon the earth, so too she is the focus of his attention and is in the privileged position over all the other women.

6 sn The common point in these four comparisons is that all are luminaries. In all four cases, each respective luminary is the focus or center of attention at the hour at hand because it dwarfs its celestial surroundings in majesty and in sheer brilliance. All other celestial objects pale into insignificance in their presence. This would be an appropriate description of her because she alone was the center and focus of his attention. All the other women paled into the background when she was present. Her beauty captured the attention of all that saw her, especially Solomon.

לְבָנֶת The term לְבְנֶת ((Pvanah)) literally means "the white one" (BDB 526 s.v. לְבָנֶת) and is always used in reference to the moon. It is only used elsewhere in the OT in parallelism with the term used to designate the sun (Isa 24:23; 30:26), which likewise is not the ordinary term, but literally means "the hot one," emphasizing the heat of the sun (Job 30:28; Ps 19:6). Both of these terms, "the white one" and "the hot one," are metonymies of adjunct in which an attribute (i.e., color and heat) are substituted for the subject itself. The white moon in contrast to the dark night sky captures one's attention, just as the red-hot sun in the afternoon sky is the center of attention during the day. The use of the figurative comparisons of her beauty to that of the dawn, sun, moon, and stars is strikingly similar to the Hebrews' figurative comparison of Simon the high priest coming out of the sanctuary to the morning star, moon, sun, and rainbow: "How glorious he was when the people gathered round him as he came out of the inner sanctuary! Like the morning star among the clouds, like the moon when it is full; like the sun shining upon the temple of the Most High, and like the rainbow

awe-inspiring<sup>9</sup> as the stars in procession?"<sup>10</sup>

The Return to the Vineyards

#### The Lover to His Beloved:11

**6:11** I went down to the orchard of walnut trees, <sup>12</sup>

to look for the blossoms of the valley, <sup>13</sup> to see if the vines had budded or if the pomegranates were in bloom. 6:12<sup>14</sup> I was beside myself with joy! <sup>15</sup>

gleaming in glorious clouds" (See G. Gerleman, Ruth, Das Hohelied [BKAT], 171).

8 tn Heb "pure as the sun."

9 tn The adjective אֵיֹב ('ayom) has been nuanced "terrible" (KJV, RSV), "frightful, fear-inspiring" (Delitzsch), "majestic" (NIV), "awesome" (NASB). In the light of its parallelism with הַבְּי (yafah, "beautiful") and אָאָר (na'vah, "lovely") in 6:4, and ("frie") and הַבְּי (barah, "bright") in 6:10, it should be nuanced "awe-inspiring" or "unnervingly beautiful."

10 th Heb "as bannered armies." The term נְבְּנְדְּלָתְה (kan-nidgalot, "as bannered armies") is used figuratively (hypocatastasis) in reference to stars which are often compared to the heavenly armies. This nuance is clear in the light of the parallelism with the dawn, moon, and sun.

11 sn It is difficult to determine whether the speaker in 6:11-12 is Solomon or the Beloved.

**12 tn** The term אֲנֵּה ('egoz, "nut") probably refers to the "walnut" or "walnut tree" (juglans regia) (DCH 1:116 s.v. אַנה' The singular form is used collectively here to refer to a grove of walnut trees.

13 sn It is not clear whether the "valley" in 6:12 is a physical valley (Jezreel Valley?), a figurative description of their love relationship, or a double entendre.

14 tn Most scholars agree that the Hebrew text of 6:12 is the most elusive in the entire  $\bar{\mbox{Song}}.$  The syntax is enigmatic and the textual reading is uncertain. The difficulty of this verse has generated a plethora of different translations: "Or ever I was aware, my soul made me [like] the chariots of Ammi-nadib" (KJV), "Before I knew it, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib" (AV), "Before I knew it, my fancy set me in a chariot beside my prince" (AT), "Before I knew...my desire hurled me on the chariots of my people, as their prince" (JB), "Before I knew it, my desire set me mid the chariots of Ammi-nadib" (JPSV), "I did not know myself, she made me feel more than a prince reigning over the myriads of his people" (NEB), "Before I knew it, my heart had made me the blessed one of my kins-women" (NAB), "Before I was aware, my soul set me [over] the chariots of my noble people" (NASB), "Before I realized it, my desire set me among the royal chariots of my people" (NIV), "...among the chariots of Amminadab" (NIV margin), "...among the chariots of the people of the prince" (NIV margin), and "Before I realized it, I was stricken with a terrible homesickness and wanted to be back among my own people" (NLT). For discussion, see R. Gordis, Song of Songs and Lamentations, 95; R. Tournay, "Les Chariots d'Aminadab (Cant. VI 12): Israel, Peuple Theophore," VT 9 (1959): 288-309; M. H. Pope, Song of Songs (AB), 584-92; R. E. Murphy, "Towards a Commentary on the Song of Songs," CBQ 39 (1977): 491-92; S. M. Paul, "An Unrecognized Medical Idiom in Canticles 6,12 and Job 9,21," Bib 59 (1978): 545-47; G. L. Carr, Song of Solomon [TOTC], 151-53.

15 th Alternately, "Before I realized it, my soul placed me among the chariots of my princely people." There is debate whether בָּשׁי (nafshi, "my soul" = "I") belongs with the first or second colon. The MT accentuation connects it with the second colon; thus, the first colon introduces indirect discourse: לא יְרַשְּׁרִי (lo' yada'ti) "I did not know" or "Before I realized it..." According to MT accentuation, the fs noun בַּשִּׁי ("my soul") is the subject of שָׁבְּיִרְנִי (samatni, Qal perfect 3rd person feminine singular from ביש, sim, + 1st person common singular suffix, "to put"): "my soul placed me...." This approach is followed by several translations (KIV, NASB, AV, AT, JB, JPSV, NAB, NIV). On the other hand, the LXX takes בישׁ בַּיִּר ("my soul") בַּיִּר ("my soul")

There please give me your myrrh,1

= "|") as the subject of אַרְיָדְיִהְילֹּא and renders the line, "My soul [= |] did not know." NEB follows suit, taking בְּּשִׁי as the subject of יַּחְיָבְּיִה and renders the line: "I did not know myself." R. Gordis and S. M. Paul posit that יַבְּיִה נְבְּשִׁי אֹל (literally "I did not know myself") is an idiom describing the emotional state of the speaker, either joy or anguish: "I was beside myself" (e.g., Job 9:21; Prov 19:2). S. Paul notes that the semantic equivalent of this Hebrew phrase is found in the Akkadian expression ramansu la ude ("he did not know himself") which is a medical idiom describing the loss of composure, lucidity, or partial loss of consciousness. He suggests that the speaker in the Song is beside himself/herself with anguish or joy (S. M. Paul, "An Unrecognized Medical Idiom in Canticles 6,12 and Job 9,21," Bib 59 [1978]: 545-47; R. Gordis, Song of Songs and Lamentations, 95).

**1tc** While MT reads מרכבות (markevot, "chariots") some medieval Hebrew MSS add the locative preposition  $\supset$  ( $b^e$ ) or comparative particle ב ( $k^e$ ) before מְּרֶבְבּוֹת to produce "in/on/among/like the chariots." Most translations supply a preposition: "My soul made me [like] the chariots of Ammi-nadib" (KJV, AV); "My fancy set me [in] a chariot beside my prince" (AT); "My soul set me [over] the chariots of my noble people" (NASB); "My desire set me [among] the chariots of Amminadab" (JPS, NJPS, NIV margin); "My desire set me [among] the royal chariots of my people" (NIV); "My desire set me [among] the chariots of the people of the prince" (NIV margin); "My desire hurled me [on] the chariots of my people, [as their] prince" (JB). R. Gordis offers a creative solution to the enigma of שַּׁמַתְנִי מַרְכְּבוֹת עָמִי־נָדִים (samatni markevot 'ammi-nadiv) by redividing the text and revocalizing it as ישם תני מרך בת עמיי נדיב (sham teni morekh 'ammi-nadiv) "There, give me your myrrh, O nobleman's daughter!" This involves two steps: (1) He redivides the MT's שֶּׁמֶתְנִי ("it placed me") into two words מַר ("There, give me"); and (2) He redivides the MT's מֶרַ שבות ("chariots") into מרך בת ("your myrrh, O daughter"). This approach is supported somewhat by the LXX, which had a difficult time with the line: "There I will give my breasts to you!" The approach of R. Gordis is explained and supported by several factors: (1) He take מרך ("your myrrh") as a figure (hypocatastasis) for her love (e.g., 4:6, 14; 5:1, 5, 13). (2) The word-division of בֶּת עֶמִי־נָרִיב ("O noble kinsman's daughter") is paralleled by the nearly identical descriptive בַּת־נָבִיב ("O nobleman's daughter") in 7:2. (3) Arabs referred to a girl as bint el akbar ("nobleman's daughter"). (4) The referent of ਬਾਰੂ ("there") is the garden/valley mentioned in 6:11. (5) This fits into the other literary parallels between 6:11-12 and 7:12-14, listed as follows: (a) "I went down to the nut grove" (6:11a) and "Let us go to the vineyards" (7:12a). (b) "to look for new growth in the valley, to see if the vines had budded, or if the pomegranates were in bloom" (6:11b) and "Let us see if the vines have budded, if the blossoms have opened, if the pomegranates are in bloom" (7:13a). (c) "There...give me your myrrh = love" (6:12b) and "There I will give you my love" (7:13b). See R. Gordis, Song of Songs and Lamentations, 95.

tn The meaning of MT נַפִּשִׁי שֶּׁמֶתְנִי מַרְכָּבוֹת עֲמִי־נָרִיב (nafshi samatni markevot 'ammi-nadiv') is enigmatic and has spawned numerous translations: "my soul made me [like] the chariots of Ammi-nadib" (KJV, AV); "my soul set me among the chariots of my princely people" (ASV), "my soul had made me as the chariots of my noble people" (NKJV); "my fancy set me [in] a chariot beside my prince" (RSV, NRSV); "my soul set me [over] the chariots of my noble people" (NASB); "my desire set me [among] the chariots of Amminadab" (JPS, NJPS, NIV margin); "my soul made me [like] the chariots of Amminadib" (WEB); "my desire set me [among] the royal chariots of my people" (NIV); "my desire set me [among] the chariots of the people of the prince" (NIV margin); "my soul set me over the chariots of my noble people" (NAU); "my desire hurled me [on] the chariots of my people, [as their] prince" (JB); "she made me feel more than a prince reigning over the myriads of his people" (NEB); "my heart had made me the blessed one of my kins-women" (NAB); "my soul troubled me for the chariots of Aminadab" (DRA); "I found myself in my princely bed with my beloved one" (NLT); "I was stricken with a terrible homesickness and wanted to be back among my own people" (LT); O daughter of my princely people.2

The Love Song and Dance

# *The Lover to His Beloved:* **6:13** (7:1)<sup>3</sup> Turn<sup>4</sup>, turn, O<sup>5</sup> Perfect One!<sup>6</sup>

"But in my imagination I was suddenly riding on a glorious chariot" (CEV).

- **2 tc** MT vocalizes and divides the text as מֶּמִינְרִיב ('amminadiv, "my princely people"); however, several other MSS read עמינְרָב ('amminadav, "Amminadab"). This alternate textual tradition is also reflected in the LXX ( $\Delta \mu \iota \nu \alpha \delta \alpha \beta$ , Aminadab) and Vulgate.
- <sup>3</sup> sn The chapter division comes one verse earlier in the Hebrew text (BHS) than in the English Bible; 6:13 ET = 7:1 HT, 7:1 ET = 7:2 HT, through 7:13 ET = 7:14 HT. Beginning with 8:1 the verse numbers in the Hebrew Bible and the English Bible are again the same.
- שובִי The imperative שובִי Alternately, "Return...Return...!" (shuvi, "Turn!") is used four times for emphasis. There are two basic interpretations to the meaning/referent of the imperative שובי ("Turn!"): (1) The villagers of Shunem are beckoning her to return to the garden mentioned in 6:11-12: "Come back! Return!" R. Gordis nuances these uses of שובי as "halt" or "stay" ("Some Hitherto Unrecognized Meanings of the Verb SHUB," *JBL* 52 [1933]: 153-62); (2) In the light of the allusion to her dancing in 7:1 (Heb 7:2), several scholars see a reference to an Arabic bridal dance. Budde emends the MT's מַבַב (sovi, "revolve, spin") from מַבַב (savav, "to turn around"). M. H. Pope (Song of Songs [AB], 595-96) also emends the MT to the Hebrew verbal root יָםֶב (yasav, "to leap, spin around") which he connects to Arabic yasaba ("to leap"). These emendations are unnecessary to make the connection with some kind of dance because שובי has a wide range of meanings from "turn" to "return."
- 5 tn The article on רְּשׁוּלְמֵּית (hashshulammit) functions as a vocative ("O Shulammit") rather than in a definite sense ("the Shulammite"). The article is often used to mark a definite addressee who is addressed in the vocative (e.g., 1 Sam 17:55, 58; 24:9; 2 Kgs 6:26; 9:5; Prov 6:6; Eccl 11:9; Zech 3:8). For the vocative use of the article, see GKC 405 §126. e; Joüon 2:506-7 §137.f; R. J. Williams, Hebrew Syntax, 19, §89; IBHS 247 §13.5.2c.
- 6 tn Heb "O Perfect One." Alternately, "O Shunammite" or "O Shulammite." The term הַשׁוּלְמִית (hashshulammit) has been variously translated: "Shulammite maiden" (NEB); "maiden of Shulam" (JB); "O maid of Shulem" (NJPS); "the Shulammite" (KJV; NASB; NIV). The meaning of the name השולמית is enigmatic and debated. LXX renders it  $\dot{\eta}$  Σουλαμιτί ( $h\bar{e}$ Soulamiti, "O Shulamite") and Vulgate renders it Sulamitis ("O Shulamite"). A few Hebrew Mss read the plural הַשׁוּלְמוֹת (hashshulamot) but the Masoretic tradition reads השולמית as the versions confirm. Eight major views have emerged in the history of interpretation of the Song. They are arranged, as follows, in order from most likely (views 1-2), plausible (views 3-5), unlikely (view 6), to bizarre (views 7-8): (1) שולמית is a substantival use of the adjectival form qutal שולם (shulam, "perfection") with the gentilic suffix ית from the root שלם (shalem, "to be complete, perfect"): "the perfect, unblemished one" (Fox). This approach is reflected in rabbinic exegesis of the 12th century: "The meaning of the Shulammite is 'perfect, without spot'" (Midrash Rabbah). (2) ישולָמִית is Qal passive participle with the feminine adjectival suffix היה from the root שַׁלֵּם ("peace"): "the peaceful one" or "the pacified one" (Andre, Robert, Joüon). This is reflected in Vulgate pacificus ("the pacified one"), and Aquila and Quinta ἡ ἐηρυνεούσα (hē eēruneousa) "the peaceful one" (Andre Robert, Joüon). (3) שור is an alternate form of the gentilic name "Shunammite" (שונמית) used to refer to inhabitants of Shunem (1 Kgs 1:15; 2 Kgs 4:12). This is reflected in LXX ἡ Σουλαμιτί (hē Soulamiti, "O Shulamite"). This is supported by several factors: (a) Gentilic names are formed by the suffix ית and the prefixed article to a place-name, e.g., הַיִּרוּשָׁלְמִית (hayy $^e$ rushalamit, "the Jerusalemite") is from יְרוֹשֶׁלֶם (y<sup>e</sup>rushalam, "Jerusalem"); (b) the interchange between lateral dental (I) and nasal dental :

Turn, turn, that I<sup>1</sup> may stare at you!

The Beloved to Her Lover:

Why<sup>2</sup> do you gaze upon the Perfect One

(n) is common in the Semitic languages (S. Moscati, Comparative Grammar, 32, §8.26); (c) the town of Shunem was also known as Shulem, due to the common interchange between a (n) and 5 (l) in Hebrew (Aharoni, 123), as seen in Eusebius' Onomasticon in which Shunem = Shulem; and (d) later revisions of the LXX read ἡ Σουναμωτί ("the Shunamite") instead of the Old Greek ἡ Σουλαμωτἰ ("the Shulamite"). Shunem was a town in the Jezreel Valley at the foot of Mount Moreh near Mount Tabor and situated about nine miles east of Megiddo, fifteen miles northwest of Beth-shean, and five miles north of Jezreel (Josh 19:18; 1 Sam 28:4; 2 Kgs 4:8). During the Roman period, the town was called Shulem. See Y. Aharoni, The Land of the Bible, 24, 152, 172, 442, 308. Some scholars suggest that "Shul/nammite" refers to Abishag, the beautiful virgin from the village of Shunem who warmed elderly King David and was sought by Adonijah (1 Kgs 2:13-25). Other scholars argue that Abishag has been imported in the Song on too slender grounds. (4) שולמית is the feminine form of the masculine name שלמה (shelomoh, "Solomon"), just as Judith is the feminine of Judah: "Shulamith" or "Solomonette" or "Solomoness" (Lowth, Goodspeed, Rowley). The feminine ending יית may be suffixed to masculine personal names to transform them into feminine names. A similar form occurs in the Ugaritic designation of Daniel's wife as Lady Daniel (e.g., mtt dnty). An anonymous Jewish commentator of the 12th century wrote: "The Shulammite was beloved of Solomon, for she was called after the name of her beloved." The 16th century commentator Joseph Ibn Yahya wrote: "And the calling of her 'Shulammite' was determined by reason of her devotion to the Holy One (Blessed be He) who is called Shelomoh." (5) As a combination of views 1-2, שולמית is a wordplay formed by the combination of the feminine name שלמית (shelomit, "Shelomite") from שלמה ("Solomon") and the gentilic name השונמית ("the Shunammite") denoting a woman from Shunem: "Solomoness/Shunammite." (6) שולְמִית is related to the Arabic root salama "consummation gift" (given to a bride the morning after the wedding): "O Consummated One" or "O Bride" (Hirschberg). (7) Those espousing a cultic interpretation of Canticles take שוּלְמִית as the name or epithet of the Canaanite moon goddess Ishtar, designated by the feminine form of the name Shelem, the name of her lover Tammuz, called Dod or Shelem (T. J. Meek). (8) An alternate cultic interpretation takes as a conflation of the name of the Assyrian war-goddess "Shulmanith" (Ishtar) and the gentilic name "the Shunammite" for a woman from Shunem (Albright). See M. V. Fox, The Song of Songs and the Egyptian Love Songs, 157-58; T. J. Meek, "Canticles and the Tammuz Cult," AJSL 39 (1922-23): 1-14; E. J. Goodspeed, "The Shulammite," AJSL 50 (1933): 102-104; H. H. Rowley, "The Meaning of 'The Shulammite'," AJSL 56 (1938): 84-91; W. F. Albright, "The Syro-Mesopotamian God Sulman-Esmun and Related Figures." AfO 7 (1931-32): 164-69; W. F. Albright, "Archaic Survivals in the Text of Canticles," Hebrew and Semitic Studies, 5; H. H. Hirschberg, "Some Additional Arabic Etymologies in Old Testament Lexicography," VT 11 (1961): 373-85; M. H. Pope, Song of Songs (AB), 596-600.

1 tn Heb "we." In ancient Near Eastern love literature, plural verbs and plural pronouns are often used in reference to singular individuals. See note on Song 2:15.

2 tn Alternately, "What do you see in...?" or "Why should you look upon...?" The interrogative pronoun הוא (mah) normally denotes "what?" or "why?" (BDB 552 s.v. יידי: HALOT 550-52 s.v. יידי: HALOT 550-52 s.v. יידי: However, Gesenius suggests that the phrase שור היידיים "however, Gesenius suggests that the phrase יידיים "however, Gesenius suggests that the phrase יידיים "hat-rekhezu) is the idiom "Look now!" on the analogy of Arabic matara ("Look now!") (GKC 443 \$137.b, n. 1).

like the dance of the Mahanaim?3

#### The Lover to His Beloved:

7:1 (7:2) How beautiful are your sandaled<sup>4</sup> feet,

O nobleman's daughter!<sup>5</sup> The curves<sup>6</sup> of your thighs<sup>7</sup> are like jewels,

the work of the hands of a master craftsman.

י בְּהַחֹלְּה (kimkholat, "like the dance"), while other Hebrew MSS read בְּהַחֹלְּה (bimkholat, "in the dances"). The LXX's שׁ אַסְסְסוֹ (סַ בּרְהַלְּה 'like the dances") reflects בְּהַהֹלִה and Symmachus' בֹּי אַדְשָׁסִבּּסוֹ (en tpōsesin, "in the injury") reflects the locative preposition but a confusion of the noun.

tn Alternately, "like a dance or two camps" or "like a dance in two lines." The phrase במחלת המחנים (kimkholat hammakhanayim) is difficult to translate: "as it were the company of two armies" (KJV), "as at the dance of the two companies" (NASB), "as at the dance of Mahanaim" (NIV), "in the Mahanaim dance" (NJPS). The meaning of the individual terms is clear: The noun מחלה ( $m^e kholah$ ) denotes "dance in a ring" (Exod 15:20; 32:19; Judg 11:34; 21:21; 1 Sam 21:12; 29:5) (HALOT 569 s.v. מְהֵלֶה). The noun מֶהֶנֶה (makhneh) denotes "encampment, camp, army" and the dual form probably means "two armies" (HALOT 570 s.v. בֵּחַנֶּה). However, the meaning of the genitive-construct מְּחֹלֵת הַמְּחַנְיִם (mekholat hammakhanayim) is unclear: "dance of the two camps/armies"[?]. W. F. Albright proposed "the dance of the Mahanaim" ("Archaic Survivals in the Text of Canticles," Hebrew and Semitic Studies, 5). LXX translates  $\dot{\omega}$  χοροὶ τ $\hat{\omega}$ ν παρεμβολ $\hat{\omega}$ ν ( $\bar{o}$  choroi  $t\bar{o}n$  $parembol\bar{o}n$ , "like the dances before the camps").

4 sn Solomon calls attention to the sandals the "noble daughter" was wearing. While it was common for women in aristocratic circles in the ancient Near East to wear sandals, women of the lower classes usually went barefoot (e.g., Ezek 16:10).

5 tn Alternately, "noble daughter" or "magnificent daughter." The title בְּרֹנְּדֶיב (bat-nadiv, "princely daughter" or "daughter of the prince"; HALOT 673 s.v. נְדִיב BDB 622 s.v. בְּיִב suggests to some that this woman is not the Israelite country maiden of chapters 1-4 and 8, but the daughter of Pharaoh whom Solomon later married (1 Kgs 11:1). While the term יחלונים often denotes nobility of position ("nobleman"), it can also denote nobility of character ("noble, willing, magnificent") (e.g., Prov 17:26; Isa 32:5, 8) (HALOT 673-74; BDB 622 s.v. 2).

<sup>6</sup> tn The term המוק (khammuq, "curve") describes the shapely curvature of her legs (HALOT 327; BDB 330 s.v. 2) rather than a curving, dancing motion (Arabic bridal dance view). Although the verb ביקה (khamaq, "turn") appears twice (Song 5:6; Jer 31:22), the noun המוק is a hapax legomenon. In postbiblical Hebrew it refers to "rundles" (Jastrow 476 s.v. בישוק). The term here has been translated in various ways: "(thigh] joints" (KJV), "rounded [thighs]" (RSV), "curves [of thighs]" (NASB), "graceful [thighs]" (NIV).

7 tn The term תְּבִיי (varekh, "thigh") may refer to (1) the fleshy upper part of the thigh where the leg joins the pelvis (Gen 32:25-32; 46:26; Exod 1:5; Judg 8:30) or (2) the outside of the thigh from the hip down (Exod 32:27; Judg 3:16, 21; Ps 45:4; Song 3:8). The first usage is usually restricted to a figure for the male loins, the source of male procreation (Gen 46:26; Exod 1:5) and the locus of an oath (Gen 24:2, 9; 47:29).

7:2 Your navel<sup>1</sup> is a round mixing bowl<sup>2</sup> -

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**1 tn** The noun שרר (shorer) is a hapax legomenon, appearing in the OT only here. There is debate whether it means "navel" or "vulva": (1) Lys and Pope suggest that שרֶר is related to Arabic srr ("secret place, pudenda, coition, fornication"). They suggest that this is contextually supported by three factors: (a) His descriptive praise of her is in ascending order, beginning with her feet and concluding with her hair. The movement from her thighs (7:1b), to her vulva (7:2a), and then to her waist (7:2b) would fit this. (b) The descriptive comparison to a glass of wine would be grotesque if her navel were in view her navel was moist or filled with liquid?
 but appropriate if her vulva were in view. (c) The navel would be a somewhat synonymous reference to the belly which is already denoted by בְּמָנֵךְ (bitnekh, "belly") in the following line. Because 7:1-7 does not use synonymous parallelism, the term שהר would have to refer to something other than the belly. (2) The term שֹׁרֶּר denotes "navel": (a) It may be related to the bi-consonantal noun שר (shor, "navel, umbilical cord") (Prov 3:8; Ezek 16:4). (b) Mishnaic Hebrew שָׁרֶר (sharar) denotes "navel, umbilical cord" (Jastrow 1634 s.v. שֶׁרֶר). For example, in a midrash on the Book of Numbers, the noun שרֶר appears in an allusion to Song 7:3 to justify the seating of the Sanhedrin in the middle of the synagogue: "As the navel (שֹרֶר) is placed in the centre of the body, so are the Sanhedrin..." (Num. Rab. 1:4). On the other hand, the meaning "vulva" never appears in Mishnaic Hebrew. Therefore, apart from this disputed usage there is no evidence that this term was ever used in this manner in Hebrew. (c) Rather than שׁרֶּב being related to Arabic sirr ("pudenda"), it could just as easily be related to the Arabic noun surr "navel." It is methodologically more sound to define שרר as "navel" than as "vulva." (d) The nuance "navel" is not as out of line contextually as Lys and Pope suggest. The navel would not be out of place in the ascending order of praise because the במגך ("abdomen") which follows may be viewed as both above and below the navel. The figurative association of the שׁרֵּר as a mixing bowl filled with wine does not imply that this bodily part must actually be moist or filled with liquid as Pope suggests. The point of comparison is not physical or visual but one of function, i.e., it is intoxicating. The comparison of the navel to a mixing bowl of wine is no more out of line than the comparison of the belly to a heap of wheat in the next line. In fact, the two go together - she is both the "drink" and "food" for Solomon. The shape of the navel is as congruent with the metaphor of the "round bowl" as the vulva; both are round and receding. (3) Since both terms are derived from the same geminate root - Hebrew מרר and Arabic srr - it is more prudent to take the term as a synecdoche of whole (lower region) for the parts (including navel and vulva). The attempt to decide between these two options may be illegitimately splitting hairs. See K&D 18:123; J. S. Deere, "Song of Solomon," BKCOT, 199-200; D. Lys, "Notes sur de Cantique," VTSup 17 (1969): 171-78; M. H. Pope, Song of Songs (AB), 617; G. L. Carr, Song of Solomon (TOTC), 157.

2 sn The expression אַנן הַפָּהַר ('aggan hassahar, "round mixing bowl") refers to a vessel used for mixing wine. Archaeologists have recovered examples of such large, deep, two handled, ring-based round bowls. The Hebrew term אָנן ("mixing bowl") came into Greek usage as ἄγγος (angos) which designates vessels used for mixing wine (e.g., Homer, Odyssey xvi 16) (LSJ 7). This is consistent with the figurative references to wine which follows: "may it never lack mixed wine." Selected Bibliography: J. P. Brown, "The Mediterranean Vocabulary for Wine," VT 19 (1969): 158; A. M. Honeyman, "The Pottery Vessels of the Old Testament," PEQ 80 (1939): 79. The comparison of her navel to a "round mixing bowl" is visually appropriate in that both are round and receding. The primary point of comparison to the round bowl is one of sense, as the following clause makes clear: "may it never lack mixed wine." J. S. Deere suggests that the point of comparison is that of taste. desirability, and function ("Song of Solomon," BKCOT, 202). More specifically, it probably refers to the source of intoxication, that is, just as a bowl used to mix wine was the source of physical intoxication, so she was the source of his sexual intoxication. She intoxicated Solomon with her love in the same way that wine intoxicates a person.

may it never lack3 mixed wine!4 Your belly is a mound of wheat, encircled<sup>6</sup> by lilies. 7:3 Your two breasts are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle. 7:4 Your neck is like a tower made of ivory.7

**3 tn** The phrase אַל־יַּחְסָר ('al-yekhsar) has traditionally been taken as an imperfect: "it never lacks mixed wine" (M. H. Pope, Song of Songs [AB], 619); "which wanteth not liquor" (KJV); "in which liquor is never lacking" (RSV); "that never lacks mixed wine" (JB); "with no lack of wine" (NEB); "that shall never want for spiced wine" (NEB); "that never lacks blended wine" (NIV). This is also how LXX understood it: μὴ ὑστερούμενος κρᾶμα (me usteroumenos, "not lacking liquor"). However, the negative אָל ('al) normally precedes a jussive expressing a wish or request: "May it never lack mixed wine!" (J. S. Deere, "Song of Solomon," BKCOT, 202). This approach is adopted by several translations: "that should never lack for mixed wine" (NASB) and "Let mixed wine not be lacking!" (NJPS).

4 sn The term אוב (mazeg, "mixed wine") does not refer to wine mixed with water to dilute its potency, but to strong wine mixed with weaker wine. The practice of mixing wine with water is not attested in the Hebrew Bible. Both מכך and מכך (mesekh) refer to strong wine mixed with weaker wine. The rabbis later distinguished between the two, stating that and was strong wine mixed with weak wine, while מַבֶּך was wine mixed with water (Aboda Zara 58b). However, both types of wine were intoxicating. Mixed wine was the most intoxicating type of wine. In a midrash on the Book of Numbers a comment is made about the practice of mixing strong wine with weaker wine (e.g., Isa 5:22; Prov 23:30), stating its purpose: "They used to mix strong wine with weak wine so as to get drunk with it" (Num. Rab. 10:8). See J. P. Brown, "The Mediterranean Vocabulary of Wine," VT 19 (1969): 154. The comparison of a wife's sexual love to intoxicating wine is common in ancient Near Eastern love literature. Parallel in thought are the words of the Hebrew sage, "May your fountain be blessed and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth. A loving doe, a graceful deer - may her love (or breasts) always intoxicate you, may you ever stagger like a drunkard in her love" (Prov 5:18-19).

5 tn Alternately, "your waist." The term במנך (bitnekh) probably refers to the woman's "belly" rather than "waist." It is associated with a woman's abdominal/stomach region rather than her hips (Prov 13:25; 18:20; Ezek 3:3). The comparison of her belly to a heap of wheat is visually appropriate because of the similarity of their symmetrical shape and tannish color. The primary point of comparison, however, is based upon the commonplace association of wheat in Israel, namely, wheat was the main staple of the typical Israelite meal (Deut 32:14; 2 Sam 4:6; 17:28; 1 Kgs 5:11; Pss 81:14; 147:14). Just as wheat satisfied an Israelite's physical hunger, she satisfied his sexual hunger. J. S. Deere makes this point in the following manner: "The most obvious commonplace of wheat was its function, that is, it served as one of the main food sources in ancient Palestine. The Beloved was both the 'food' (wheat) and 'drink' (wine) of the Lover. Her physical expression of love nourished and satisfied him. His satisfaction was great for the 'mixed wine' is intoxicating and the 'heap of wheat' was capable of feeding many. The 'heap of wheat' also suggests the harvest, an association which contributes to the emotional quality of the metaphor. The harvest was accompanied with a joyous celebration over the bounty yielded up by the land. So also, the Beloved is bountiful and submissive in giving of herself, and the source of great joy" ("Song of Solomon," BKCOT, 203-204).

6 tn Heb "fenced around by."

**7 tn** Alternately. "the ivory tower." The noun ושה (hashshen. "ivory") is a genitive of composition, that is, a tower made out of ivory. Solomon had previously compared her neck to a tower (Song 4:4). In both cases the most obvious point of comparison has to do with size and shape, that is, her neck was long and symmetrical. Archaeology has never found a tower overlaid with ivory in the ancient Near East and it is doubtYour eyes are the pools in Heshbon by the gate of Bath-Rabbim.<sup>1</sup> Your nose is like the tower of Lebanon overlooking Damascus.

7:5 Your head crowns² you like Mount Carmel.³

The locks of your hair<sup>4</sup> are like royal tapestries<sup>5</sup> –

the king is held captive<sup>6</sup> in its tresses!

ful that there ever was such a tower. The point of comparison might simply be that the shape of her neck looks like a tower, while the color and smoothness of her neck was like ivory. Solomon is mixing metaphors: her neck was long and symmetrical like a tower; but also elegant, smooth, and beautiful as ivory. The beauty, elegance, and smoothness of a woman's neck is commonly compared to ivory in ancient love literature. For example, in a piece of Greek love literature, Anacron compared the beauty of the neck of his beloved Bathyllus to ivory (Odex xxix 28-29).

1 sn It is impossible at the present time to determine the exact significance of the comparison of her eyes to the "gate of Bath-Rabbim" because this site has not yet been identified by archaeologists.

2 tn Heb "your head [is] upon you."

3 sn The Carmel mountain range is a majestic sight. The mountain range borders the southern edge of the plain of Esdraelon, dividing the Palestinian coastal plain into the Plain of Acco to the north and the Plains of Sharon and Philistia to the south. Its luxuriant foliage was legendary (Isa 33:9; Amos 1:2; Nah 1:4). Rising to a height of approximately 1750 feet (525 m), it extends southeast from the Mediterranean for 13 miles (21 km). Due to its greatness and fertility, it was often associated with majesty and power (Isa 35:2; Jer 46:18). The point of the comparison is that her head crowns her body just as the majestic Mount Carmel rested over the landscape, rising above it in majestic and fertile beauty. See ZPEB 1:755; C. F. Pfeiffer and H. F. Vos, Wycliffe Historical Geography of Bible Lands, 100.

4 sn The term רַּלְה (dallah, "locks, hair") refers to dangling curls or loose hair that hangs down from one's head (HALOT 222-23 s.v. וּהַלְּה). The Hebrew term is from a common Semitic root meaning "to hang down," and is related to Arabic tadaldala "dangle" and Ethiopic delul "dangling curls" (KBL 222-23).

<sup>5</sup> tn Heb "like purple" or "like purple fabric." The term אַרְנָכֶּו ('argaman, "purple fabric") refers to wool dyed with red purple (HALOT 84 s.v. אַרְבֶּבֶּן). It is used in reference to purple threads (Exod 35:25; 39:3; Esth 1:9) or purple cloth (Num 4:13; Judg 8:26; Esth 8:15; Prov 31:22; Jer 10:9; Song 3:10). NASB translates it as "purple threads," while NIV nuances this term as "royal tapestry." M. H. Pope (The Song of Songs [AB], 629-30) adduces several ancient Near Eastern texts and suggests that it refers to purple hair-dye. The comparison is to hair which entangles Solomon like binding cords and therefore, it seems most likely that the idea here must be purple threads. The Hebrew noun is a loanword from Hittite argaman "tribute," which is reflected in Akkadian argamannu "purple" (also "tribute" under Hittite influence), Ugaritic argmn "tax, purple," Aramaic argwn "purple" (HALOT 84). Purple cloth and threads were considered very valuable (Ezek 27:7, 16) and were commonly worn by kings as a mark of their royal position (Judg 8:26).

6 tn Alternately, "captivated." The verb אָפָּר ('asar, "to bind, capture, hold captive, put in prison") is commonly used of binding a prisoner with cords and fetters (Gen 42:34; Judg 15:10-13; 16:5-12; 2 Kgs 17:4; 23:33; 25:7; 2 Chr 33:11) (HALOT 75 s.v. אפרי אייני אי

7:6 How beautiful you are! How lovely, O love, 7 with your delights!8

The Palm Tree and the Palm Tree Climber

#### The Lover to His Beloved:

7:7 Your stature9 is like a palm tree,10

at me, with her eyes she catches me, with her necklace she entangles me, and with her seal ring she brands me" (Song 43 in the Chester Beatty Cycle, translated by W. K. Simpson, ed., *The Literature of Ancient Egypt*, 324). J. S. Deere suggests, "The concluding part of the metaphor, 'The king is held captive by your tresses,' is a beautiful expression of the powerful effect of love. A strong monarch was held prisoner by the beauty of his Beloved" ("Song of Solomon," BKCOT, 206-207). This is a startling statement because Solomon emphasizes that the one who was being held captive like a prisoner in bonds was the "king"! At this point in world history, Solomon was the ruler of the most powerful and wealthy nation in the world (1 Kgs 3:13; 10:23-29). And yet he was held totally captive and subject to the beauty of this country maiden!

tn Alternately, "O beloved one." Consonantal אהבה is vocalized by the Masoretes as הַבְּהָר (ahavah, "love"). However, a variant Hebrew ms tradition preserves the vocalization of the passive form הַבְּהַר (ahavah, "beloved one, one who is loved"), as is also reflected in the Vulgate and Syriac. The term בי ("love") usually refers to sexual (2 Sam 13:15; Prov 5:19) or emotional love between a man and a woman (2 Sam 1:26; Song 8:6-7) (HALOT 18 s.v. והַבָּהוֹבְּה

פּתְנֵי (batta'anugim, "in/with delights"). A variant Hebrew textual tradition preserves the alternate reading בְּתְנֵי (batta'anugim, "in/with delights"). A variant Hebrew textual tradition preserves the alternate reading בְּתְנֵינְתִּינְם (bat ta'anugim, "daughter of delights" or "delightful daughter"). The textual variant is either due to haplography (mistakenly writing ה once instead of twice) or dittography (mistakenly writing ה twice instead of once). The alternate textual tradition is reflected in Aquila θυγάτηρ τρυφών (thugarēr truphōn, "daughter of delights"). However, the MT reading בּתְנֵינִרְיִנֵם ('ahavah batta'anugim, "O love, in your delights") is supported by LXX (Oid Greek) ἀγάπη, ἐν τρυφαῖς σου (agapē, en truphais sou, "O love, in your delights").

tn The term אַנְבֶּיה (ta'anug, "luxury, daintiness, exquisite delight") is used in reference to: (1) tender love (Mic 1:16); (2) the object of pleasure (Mic 2:9); (3) erotic pleasures (Eccl 2:8); (4) luxury befitting a king (Prov 19:10). The term may have sexual connotations, as when it is used in reference to a harem of women who are described as "the delights" of the heart of a man (Eccl 2:8) (BDB 772 s.v. מְּנֵבֶּנֵינ.

9 tn The term קְּמֶבֶּר (qomatek, "stature") indicates the height of an object, e.g., tall person (1 Sam 16:7; Ezek 13:8), tall tree (2 Kgs 19:23; Isa 10:33; Ezek 31:3-5, 10-14), a towering vine (Ezek 19:11).

10 sn The term תְּבֶּה (tamar, "palm tree") refers to the date palm tree (Phoenix dactyliferia) that can reach a height of 80 feet (24 m). It flourished in warm moist areas and oases from Egypt to India. Ancient Iraq was the leading grower of date palms and dates in the ancient world, as today (M. H. Pope, The Song of Songs [AB], 633). There is also a hint of eroticism in this palm tree metaphor because the palm tree was often associated with fertility in the ancient world. The point of comparison is that she is a tall, slender, fertile young woman. The comparison of a tall and slender lady to a palm tree is not uncommon in love literature: "O you, whose height is that of a palm tree in a serail" (Homer, Odyssey vi 162-63) (S. H. Stephan, "Modern Palestinian Parallels to the Song of Songs," JPOS 2 [1922]: 76).

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and your breasts are like clusters of grapes.<sup>1</sup>
7:8 I want<sup>2</sup> to climb the palm tree,<sup>3</sup> and take hold of its fruit stalks.
May your breasts be like the clusters of grapes,<sup>4</sup> and may the fragrance of your breath be

and may the fragrance of your breath be like apples!<sup>5</sup>

**1 tn** Alternately "clusters of figs." The term אַשְׁבַלוֹת ('ashkolot, "clusters") usually refers to (1) clusters of grapes, that is, the stalk on which the bunch of grapes grow and the bunch of grapes themselves (Gen 40:10; Num 13:23-24; Deut 32:32; Isa 65:8; Mic 7:1) or (2) the berry on a cluster of henna bush (Song 1:14) (HALOT 95 s.v. אשכול ). It is possible that this is an anomalous usage in reference to a cluster of dates rather than to a cluster of grapes for three reasons: (1) the תַּמֶר (tamar, "palm tree") referred to in 7:7 is a date palm, (2) the term סָנְסְנִים (sansinnim, "fruit stalks") in 7:8a refers to the fruit stalk of dates (Rademus dactylorum), being related to Akkadian sissinnu ("part of the date palm"), and (3) the reference to climbing the palm tree in 7:8a is best understood if it is a date palm and its fruit are dates. The comparison between her breasts and clusters of dates probably has to do with shape and multiplicity, as well as taste, as the rest of this extended metaphor intimates. M. H. Pope (The Song of Songs [AB], 634) notes: "The comparison of the breasts to date clusters presumably intended a pair of clusters to match the dual form of the word for 'breasts.' A single cluster of dates may carry over a thousand single fruits and weigh twenty pounds or more. It may be noted that the multiple breasts of the representations of Artemis of Ephesus look very much like a cluster of large dates, and it might be that the date clusters here were intended to suggest a similar condition of polymasty."

2 tn Heb "I said, 'I will climb....'" The verb אָפֶּר (amar, "to say") is often used metonymically in reference to the thought process, emphasizing the spontaneity of a decision or of an idea which has just entered the mind of the speaker moments before he speaks (Gen 20:11; 26:9; 44:28; Exod 2:14; Num 24:11; Ruth 4:4; 1 Sam 20:4, 26; 2 Sam 5:6; 12:22; 2 Kgs 5:11). M. H. Pope renders it appropriately: "Methinks" (Song of Songs [AB], 635).

3 sn A Palestinian palm tree grower would climb a palm tree for two reasons: (1) to pluck the fruit and (2) to pollinate the female palm trees. Because of their height and because the dates would not naturally fall off the tree, the only way to harvest dates from a palm tree is to climb the tree and pluck the fruit off the stalks. This seems to be the primary imagery behind this figurative expression. The point of comparison here would be that just as one would climb a palm tree to pluck its fruit so that it might be eaten and enjoyed, so too Solomon wanted to embrace his Beloved so that he might embrace and enjoy her breasts. It is possible that the process of pollination is also behind this figure. A palm tree is climbed to pick its fruit or to dust the female flowers with pollen from the male flowers (the female and male flowers were on separate trees). To obtain a better yield and accelerate the process of pollination, the date grower would transfer pollen from the male trees to the flowers on the female trees. This method of artificial pollination is depicted in ancient Near Eastern art. For example, a relief from Gozan (Tel Halaf) dating to the 9th century B.C. depicts a man climbing a palm tree on a wooden ladder with his hands stretched out to take hold of its top branches to pollinate the flowers or to pick the fruit from the tree. The point of this playful comparison is clear: Just as a palm tree grower would climb a female tree to pick its fruit and to pollinate it with a male flower, Solomon wanted to grasp her breasts and to make love to her (The Illustrated Family Encyclopedia of the Living Bible, 10:60).

4 tn Heb "of the vine."

7:9 May your mouth<sup>6</sup> be like the best wine, flowing smoothly for my beloved,

flowing smoothly for my beloved, gliding gently over our lips as we sleep together.<sup>7</sup>

Poetic Refrain: Mutual Possession

# The Beloved about Her Lover:

7:10 I am my beloved's, and he desires me!8

The Journey to the Countryside

# The Beloved to Her Lover:

7:11 Come, my beloved, let us go to the countryside;

let us spend the night in the villages. 7:12 Let us rise early to go to the vine-yards,

yards,
to see if the vines have budded,
to see if their blossoms have opened,
if the pomegranates are in bloom –
there I will give you my love.
7:13 The mandrakes<sup>9</sup> send out their fragrance;
over our door is every delicacy,<sup>10</sup>

• tn The term הַ (khek, "palate, mouth") is often used as a metonymy for what the mouth produces, e.g., the mouth is the organ of taste (Ps 119:103; Job 12:11; 20:13; 34:3; Prov 24:13; Song 2:3), speech (Job 6:30; 31:30; 33:2; Prov 5:3; 8:7), sound (Hos 8:1), and kisses (Song 5:16; 7:10) (HALOT 313 s.v. תַחָד, BDB 335 s.v. תַחָד). The metonymical association of her palate/mouth and her kisses is made explicit by RSV which translated the term as "kisses."

א tec The MT reads שׁבְּתֵי יְשׁנֵּים (shifte yeshenim, "lips of those who sleep"). However, an alternate Hebrew reading of שְּׁבְּתִי (sefata vesinna, "my lips and my teeth") is suggested by the Greek tradition (LXX, Aquila, Symmachus): χείλεσίν μου καὶ ὀδοῦσιν (cheilesin mou kai odousin, "my lips and teeth"). This alternate reading, with minor variations, is followed by NAB, NIV, NRSV, TEV, NLT.

**tn** Or "his lips as he falls asleep." *Heb* "the lips of sleepers." Alternately, "over lips and teeth" (so NIV, NRSV, NLT).

8 tn Heb "his desire is for me" (so NASB, NIV, NRSV).

9 sn In the ancient Near East the mandrake was a widely used symbol of erotic love because it was thought to be an aphrodisiac and therefore was used as a fertility drug. The unusual shape of the large forked roots of the mandrake resembles the human body with extended arms and legs. This similarity gave rise to the popular superstition that the mandrake could induce conception and it was therefore used as a fertility drug. It was so thoroughly associated with erotic love that its name is derived from the Hebrew root דור (dod., "love"), that is, דורְאַוֹם, (duda'im) denotes "love-apples." Arabs used its fruit and roots as an aphrodisiac and referred to it as abd alsal'm ("servant of love") (R. K. Harrison, "The Mandrake and the Ancient World," EQ 28 [1956]: 188-89; Fauna and Flora of the Bible, 138-39).

10 sn Her comparison of their love to fruit stored "over our door" reflects an ancient Near Eastern practice of storing fruit on a shelf above the door of a house. In the ancient Near East, fruits were stored away on shelves or cupboards above doorways where they were out of reach and left to dry until they became very sweet and delectable. The point of comparison in this figurative expression seems to be two-fold: (1) She was treasuring up special expressions of her sexual love to give to him, and (2) All these good things were for him alone to enjoy. See M. H. Pope, The Song of Songs [AB], 650.

<sup>5</sup> tn See tn on "apples" in 2:5.

both new and old, which I have stored up for you, my lover.

The Beloved's Wish Song

#### The Beloved to Her Lover:

8:1 Oh, how I wish you were my little brother, mursing at my mother's breasts; if I saw you outside, I could kiss you – surely no one would despise me!

1 tn The imperfect אָרָהְיִי (vittenka) may denote a desire or wish of the subject, e.g., Gen 24:58; Exod 21:36; 1 Sam 21:10 (IBHS 509 §31.4h). The optative particle יבָּ (mi) with an imperfect expresses an unreal wish, e.g., Judg 9:29; 2 Sam 15:4; Mal 1:10. The construction אָרָי יִּבְּוּנָר (mi vittenka) is an idiom expressing an unreal wish in the optative mood (HALOT 575 s.v. יבֶּ), e.g., "Would that it were evening...Would that it were morning!" (KIV) or "If only it were evening...If only it were morning!" (KIV) (Deut 28:67); "Oh that I knew where I might find him" (KUV, NASB, NJPS), "I wish I had known," "If only I knew where to find him; if only I could go to his dwelling!" (NIV) (Job 23:3); "I wish that all the LORD's people were prophets!" (NIV), "Would that all the LORD's people were prophets" (NASB) (Num 11:29). Evidently, the LXX did not understand the idiom; it rendered the line in wooden literalness: Τίς δώη σε ἀδελφιδόν μου (Tis dōē se adelphidon mou, "Who might give/make you as my brother?").

2 tn Heb "you were to me like a brother."

3 tn Heb "found" or "met." The juxtaposition of the two imperfects without an adjoining vav forms a conditional clause denoting a real condition (GKC 493 §159.b). The first imperfect is the protasis; the second is the apodosis: "If I found you אֵמְנָאֵדֶ ('emtsa'aka) outside, I would kiss you (אֶשֶׁקֶדֶ, 'eshshaqekha)." The imperfects are used to express a condition and consequence which are regarded as being capable of fulfillment in the present or future time (GKC 493 §159. b). The simple juxtaposition of two verbal clauses without any grammatical indicator, such as vav or a conditional particle, is rather rare: "If you rebel הְּמֶּלֶלוֹי, וֹתְמֶּלֶלוֹי, i will disperse you הְמֶּלֶלוֹי, 'afits') among the nations" (Neh 1:8); "If I counted them (אַספּרֶם, 'espperem), they would be more numerous (ירבון, virbun) than the sand!" (Ps 139:18); "If a man has found a wife (מַצָּא), matsa'), he has found (מָצָא) a good thing" (Prov 18:22) (Jouon 2:627 §167.a.1). On the other hand, LXX treated the imperfects as denoting future temporal sequence: εὑροῦσά σε ἒξω, φιλήσω σε (eurousa se exō, philēsō se, "I will find you outside, I will kiss you"). Ordinarily, however, vav or a temporal particle introduces a temporal clause (Joüon 2:627 §167.a; GKC 502 §164.d). The English translation tradition generally adopts the conditional nuance: "If I found you outdoors, I would kiss you" (NASB), "Then, if I found you outside, I would kiss you" (NIV). However, a few translations adopt the temporal nuance: "When I should find thee without, I would kiss thee" (KJV), "Then I could kiss you when I met you in the street" (NJPS).

4 th The particle בּוֹ (gam, "surely") is used with א'ז (lo', "no one") for emphasis: "yea, none" (HALOT 195 s.v. בַּוַ). Similar examples: בּוֹלָ בְּיִלְּאָרָ (lo'...gam'ekhad, "not even one"; 2 Sam 17:12); יבו לארן (gam'en, "yet there is no one"; Eccl 4:8).

5 sn Song 8:1-2 may be classified as a "a lover's wish song" that is similar in content and structure to an ancient Egyptian love song in which the lover longs for greater intimacy with his beloved: "I wish I were her Negro maid who follows at her feet; then the skin of all her limbs would be revealed to me. I wish I were her washerman, if only for a month; then I would be [entranced], washing out the Moringa oils in her diaphanous garments. I wish I were the seal ring, the guardian of her [fingers]; then [...]" (The Cairo Love Songs, 25-27, in W. K. Simpson, ed., *The Literature of Ancient Egypt*, 311). The Egyptian and Hebrew parallels display a similar structure: (1) introductory expression of the lover's wish to be something/ someone in a position of physical loseness with the Beloved; (2) description of the person/thing that is physically close to the Beloved; and (3) concluding description of the resultant

8:2 I would lead you and bring you to my mother's house, the one who taught me.<sup>6</sup>

greater degree of intimacy with the Beloved. In the Egyptian parallel it is the man who longs for greater closeness; in the Hebrew song it is the woman. The Egyptian love song borders on the sensual; the Hebrew love song is simply romantic. The Beloved expresses her desire for greater freedom to display her affection for Solomon. In ancient Near Eastern cultures the public display of affection between a man and woman was frowned upon – sometimes even punished. For example, in Assyrian laws the punishment for a man kissing a woman in public was to cut off his upper lip. On the other hand, public displays of affection between children and between family members were allowed. Accordingly, the Beloved hyperbolically wished that she and Solomon were children from the same family so she could kiss him anytime she wished without fear of punishment or censure.

6 tc The MT reads אָנְהְגַרְ אָל־בְּיִת אָפִי הְלְּפֹרֵנִי ('enhagakha 'elbet 'immi t<sup>e</sup>lamm<sup>e</sup>deni, "I would bring you to the house of my mother who taught me"). On the other hand, the LXX reads Εἰσάξω σε εἰς οἶκον μητρός μου καὶ εἰς ταμίειον τῆς συλλαβούση με (Eisaxō se eis oikon mētpos mou kai eis tamieion tēs sullabousē me) which reflects a Hebrew reading of אנהגך אל-בית אמי ואל חדר הורתי ('enhagakha 'el-bet 'immi ve'el kheder horati, "I would bring you to the house of my mother, to the chamber of the one who bore me"), followed by NRSV. The LXX variant probably arose due to: (1) the syntactical awkwardness of תַּלְמְּדֵנִי ("she taught me" or "she will teach me"), (2) the perceived need for a parallel to אל־בֵּית אָבִי ("to the house of my mother"), and (3) the influence of Song 3:4 which reads: ער־שהביאתיו אל־בית אמי ואל חדר ('ad-sheheve'tiv 'el-bet 'immi ve'el kheder horati, "until l brought him to the house of my mother, to the chamber of the one who bore me"). The MT reading should be adopted because (1) it is the more difficult reading, (2) it best explains the origin of the LXX variant, and (3) the origin of the LXX variant is easily understood in the light of Song 3:4.

tn The verb הְלְּמְבֵנֵי (\*lammedeni) may be rendered in two basic ways: (1) future action: "she will teach me" or more likely as (2) past customary action: "who would instruct me" (KJV), "who used to instruct me" (NASB), "she who has taught me" (NIV), "she who taught me" (NIPS). This is an example of casus pendus in which the subject of the verb serves as a relative pronoun to the antecedent noun ("my mother"). The JPS parses בְּלְשְׁבֵנֵי as 2nd person masculine singular ("that you might instruct me") rather than 3rd person feminine singular ("she would teach me"). However, this would obscure the imagery: The Beloved wished that Solomon was her little brother still nursing on her mother's breast. The Beloved, who had learned from her mother's example, would bring him inside their home and she would give him her breast: "I would give you spiced wine to drink, the nectar of my pomegranates."

I would give you<sup>1</sup> spiced wine<sup>2</sup> to drink,<sup>3</sup> the nectar of my pomegranates.<sup>4</sup>

Double Refrain: Embracing and Adjuration

#### The Beloved about Her Lover:

8:3 His left hand caresses my head, and his right hand stimulates me.<sup>5</sup>

#### The Beloved to the Maidens:

8:4 I admonish you, O maidens<sup>6</sup> of Jerusalem:

"Do not<sup>7</sup> arouse or awaken love until it pleases!"

1 sn Continuing the little brother/older sister imagery of 8:1, the Beloved suggests that if she had been an older sister and he had been her little brother, she would have been able to nurse Solomon. This is a euphemism for her sensual desire to offer her breasts to Solomon in marital lovemaking.

2 tc The Masoretic vocalization of מֵייֵן הֶרֶבְּלְה (miyyayin hareqakh) suggests that הְבְּלֵהְ ("spiced mixture") stands in apposition to יְיִיבָּי ("wine"): "wine, that is, spiced mixture." However, several Hebrew Mss read the genitive-construct vocalization יְרֵיבֶּלְה ("spiced wine"). This alternate vocalization tradition is reflected in the Targum and other versions, such as the LXX. The genitive noun מְיִבְּלֶּהְ ("spices, spiced mixture") functions as an adjective modifying the preceding construct noun ("wine").

tn Alternately "wine, that is, spiced mixture." The term רֶּבֶּח (regakh, "spice mixture, spices") refers to ground herbs that were tasty additives to wine (HALOT 1290 s.v. רֶבֶּה.).

3 sn There is a phonetic wordplay (paronomasia) between אַשְּקֶר ('eshshaqekha, "I would kiss you" from אַשְּקָר, nashaq, "to kiss") in 8:1 and אַדְּקָר ('ashqekha, "I would cause you to drink" from אַדְּקָי, shaqah, "to drink") in 8:2. This wordplay draws attention to the unity of her "wish song" in 8:1-2. In 8:1 the Beloved expresses her desire to kiss Solomon on the lips when they are outdoors; while in 8:2 she expresses her desire for Solomon to kiss her breasts when they are in the privacy of her home indoors.

4 sn This statement is a euphemism: the Beloved wished to give her breasts to Solomon, like a mother would give her breast to her nursing baby. This is the climactic point of the "lover's wish song" of Song 8:1-2. The Beloved wished that Solomon was her little brother still nursing on her mother's breast. The Beloved, who had learned from her mother's example, would bring him inside their home and she would give him her breast: "I would give you spiced wine to drink, the nectar of my pomegranates." The phrase "my pomegranates is a euphemism for her breasts. Rather than providing milk from her breasts for a nursing baby, the Beloved's breasts would provide the sensual delight of "spiced wine" and "nectar" for her lover.

to The MT reads the singular noun with 1st person common singular suffix בינוים (rimmoni, "my pomegranate"). However, many Hebrew Mss preserve an alternate textual tradition of a plural noun without the 1st person common singular suffix בענים (rimmonim, "pomegranates"), which is also reflected in the Aramaic Targum. However, LXX סׁסֵסׁע μου (hrōn mou, "the nectar of my pomegranates") reflects both the plural noun and the 1st person common singular suffix. Therefore, R. Gordis suggests that MT בְּעֵלֵה san apocopated plural with a 1st person common singular suffix: "my pomegranates."

5 tn See the notes on 2:6, which is parallel to this verse.

6 tn Heb "daughters of Jerusalem."

7 tn Heb "Why arouse or awaken ...?" Although the particle πίρ (mah) is used most often as an interrogative pronoun ("What?" "Why?"), it also can be used as a particle of negation. For example, "How (πίρ) could I look at a girl?" means "I have not looked at a girl!" (Job 31:1); "What (πίρ) do we have to drink?" means "We have nothing to drink" (Exod 15:24); "What (πίρ) part do we have?" means "We have no part" (I kgs 12:16); and "Why (πίρ) arouse or awaken love?" means "Do not arouse or awaken love!" (Song 8:4). See HALOT 551 s.v. πίρ C.

The Awakening of Love

#### The Maidens about His Beloved:

**8:5** Who is this coming up from the desert, leaning on her beloved?

#### The Beloved to Her Lover:

Under the apple tree I aroused you;<sup>8</sup> there your mother conceived you, there she who bore you was in labor of childbirth.<sup>9</sup>

The Nature of True Love

# The Beloved to Her Lover:

8:6 Set me like a cylinder seal<sup>10</sup> over your heart.<sup>11</sup>

8 sn The imagery of v. 6 is romantic: (1) His mother originally conceived him with his father under the apple tree, (2) his mother gave birth to him under the apple tree, and (3) the Beloved had now awakened him to love under the same apple tree. The cycle of life and love had come around full circle under the apple tree. While his mother had awakened his eyes to life, the Beloved had awakened him to love. His parents had made love under the apple tree to conceive him in love, and now Solomon and his Beloved were making love under the same apple tree of love.

9 tn Or "went into labor." The verb קְבֶּל (khaval, "become pregnant") is repeated in 8:5b and 8:5c, and has a two-fold range of meaning: (1) transitive: "to conceive [a child]" and (2) intransitive: "to be in travail [of childbirth]" (HALOT 286 s.V. IV בור). In 8:5b it denotes "to conceive," and in 8:5c it is "to be in travail [of childbirth]."

10 sn In the ancient Near East היה (khotam, "seal") was used to denote ownership and was thus very valuable (Jer 22:24; Hag 2:23). Seals were used to make a stamp impression to identify the object as the property of the seal's owner (HALOT 300 s.v. | היה היה Seals were made of semi-precious stone upon which was engraved a unique design and an inscription, e.g., LMLK [PN] "belonging to king [...]." The impression could be placed upon wet clay of a jar or on a writing tablet by rolling the seal across the clay. Because it was a valuable possession its owner would take careful precautions to not lose it and would keep it close to him at all times.

11 th The term לְבֶּב (levav, "heart") is used figuratively here as (1) a metonymy (container for the thing contained) for his chest over which the cylinder seal was hung or (2) a metonymy (concrete body part for the abstract emotions with which it is associated) for his emotions, such as love and loyalty to the Beloved (e.g., Judg 16:25; Ruth 3:7; 1 Sam 25:36; 2 Sam 13:28; 1 Kgs 8:66) (1 HALOT 514-15 s.v. 12) (see H. W. Wolff, Anthropology of the Old Testament, 40-58).

**sn** There were two kinds of cylinder seals in the ancient Near East, namely, those worn around one's neck and those worn around one's wrist. The typical Mesopotamian seal was mounted on a pin and hung on a string or necklace around one's neck. The cylinder seal hung around one's neck would, figuratively speaking, rest over the heart (metonymy of association). The Beloved wished to be to Solomon like a cylinder seal worn over his heart. She wanted to be as intimate with her lover as the seal worn by him (W. W. Hallo, "'As the Seal Upon Thy Heart': Glyptic Roles in the Biblical World," *BRev* 2 [1985]: 26).

like a signet<sup>1</sup> on your arm.<sup>2</sup>
For love is as strong as death,<sup>3</sup>
passion<sup>4</sup> is as unrelenting<sup>5</sup> as Sheol.
Its flames burst forth,<sup>6</sup>
it is a blazing flame.<sup>7</sup>

1 tn Literally "cylinder-seal" or "seal." The term בְּיִחְה (kho-tam, "cylinder-seal") is repeated in 8:6 for emphasis. The translation above uses the terms "cylinder seal" and "signet" simply for the sake of poetic variation. The Beloved wanted to be as safe and secure as a cylinder seal worn on the arm or around the neck, hanging down over the heart. She also wanted to be placed on his heart (emotions), like the impression of a cylinder seal is written on a document. She wanted to be "written" on his heart like the impression of a cylinder seal, and kept secure in his love as a signet ring is worn around his arm/hand to keep it safe.

2 tn Alternately, "wrist." In Palestine cylinder seals were often hung on a bracelet worn around one's wrist. The cylinder seal was mounted on a pin hanging from a bracelet. The cylinder seal in view in Song 8:6 could be a stamp seal hung from a bracelet of a type known from excavations in Israel. See W. W. Hallo, "'As the Seal Upon Thy Heart': Glyptic Roles in the Biblical World," BRev 2 (1985): 26.

<sup>3</sup> sn It was a common practice in the ancient world to compare intense feelings to death. The point of the expression "love is as strong as death" means that love is extremely strong. The expression "love is as cruel as Sheol" may simply mean that love can be profoundly cruel. For example: "His soul was vexed to death," means that he could not stand it any longer (Judg 16:16). "I do well to be angry to death," means that he was extremely angry (Jonah 4:9). "My soul is sorrowful to death," means that he was exceedingly sorrowful (Matt 26:38 = Mark 14:34) (D. W. Thomas, "A Consideration of Some Unusual Ways of Expressing the Superlative in Hebrew," VT 3 [1953]: 220-21).

ל th Alternately, "jealousy." The noun מוֹל (qin'ah) has a wide range of meanings: "jealousy" (Prov 6:34; 14:30; 27:4), "competitiveness" (Eccl 4:4; 9:6), "anger" (Num 5:14, 30), "zeal" (2 kgs 10:16; Pss 69:10; 119:139; Job 5:2; Sir 30:24), and "passion" (Song 8:6). The Hebrew noun is related to the Akkadian and Arabic roots that mean "to become intensely red" or "become red with passion," suggesting that the root denotes strong emotion. Although is traditionally rendered "jealousy" (KJV, RSV, NASB, NIV), the parallelism with Although Although with the preceding with the service of the KJV in a bad sense in Song 8:6, 'jealousy is as cruel as the grave,' but it could be taken in a good sense in parallel with the preceding, 'ardent zeal is as strong as the grave" (TWOT 2:803).

5 tn Heb "harsh" or "severe."

6 tn Heb "Its flames are flames of fire."

 $^7$  tn The noun שְּלְהֶבְּתְיִה (shalhevetyah, "mighty flame") is related to the nouns שְׁלְהֶבָּת (shalhevet, "flame"), לֶּהְבָּה (lehavah, "flame"), and לְּהֵב (lahav, "flame"), all of which are derived from the root להב "to burn, blaze, flame up" (HALOT 520 s.v. בֹּהַב ). The form שֵׁלְהֶבֶּתְיָה is an unusual noun pattern with (1) a prefix 👺 that is common in Akkadian but rare in Hebrew; it has an intensive adjective meaning, (2) a feminine ar ending, and (3) a suffix ייָה whose meaning is debated. The suffix ייָה has been taken in three ways by scholars and translators: (1) יה is an abbreviated form of the divine name יהוה ("Yahweh"), functioning as a genitive of source: "the flame of the LORD" (NASB). The abbreviated form יוֹה is used only in poetic texts as a poetic variation of יהוה (e.g., Exod 15:2; 17:16; Pss 68:5, 19; 77:12; 89:9; 94:7, 12; 102:19; 104:35; 105:45; 106:1, 48; 111:1; 112:1; 113:1, 9; 115:17, 18; 116:19; 117:2; 118:5, 14, 17-19; 122:4; 130:3; 135:1, 3, 4, 21; 146:1, 10; 147:1, 20; 148:1, 14; 149:1, 9; 150:1, 6; lsa 12:2; 26:4; 38:11). However, the Masoretes did not point the text as שַׁלְהַבֶּת־יַה (shalhevet-yah) with maggep and daghesh in the ¬¬, as would be the case with the divine name. (2) Thomas suggests that, just as אֵל ('elohim) and אֵל ('el) are sometimes used to express superlatives or intensive ideas, so בי expresses the superlative/intensive: "a mighty flame" (D. W. Thomas, "A Consideration of Some Unusual Ways of Expressing the Super8:7 Surging waters cannot quench love; floodwaters<sup>8</sup> cannot overflow it.

If someone were to offer all his possessions<sup>9</sup> to buy love, <sup>10</sup>
the offer <sup>11</sup> would be utterly despised. <sup>12</sup>

The Brother's Plan and the Sister's Reward

#### The Beloved's Brothers:

8:8 We have a little sister, and as yet she has no breasts. What shall we do for our sister on the day when she is spoken for?<sup>13</sup> 8:9 If she is a wall,<sup>14</sup> we will build on her a battlement<sup>15</sup> of silver:

וגניים וא Hebrew," VT 3 [1953]: 209-24). Examples of אֲלֹהִים ( $^{\prime}$ elohim): "a mighty wind" (Gen 1:2), "a mighty prince" (Gen 23:6), "a great struggle" (Gen 30:8), "a great fire" (Job 1:16), "an exceeding great city" (Jonah 3:3). Examples of א ( $^{\prime}$ elohim): "the mighty mountains" (Ps 36:7) and "the mighty cedars" (Ps 80:11). Examples of א ( $^{\prime}$ uh) suffixed: "darkest gloom" (Jer 2:31), "mighty deeds" (Jer 32:19), and "mighty deeds" (Ps 77:12). (3) The most likely view is that  $^{\prime}$ n is an intensive adjectival suffix, similar to  $^{\prime}$ iy and  $^{\prime}$ ay and  $^{\prime}$ aw in Aramaic, Akkadian, and Arabic: "a most vehement flame" (KJV), "a mighty flame" (RSV, NIV), and "a blazing flame" (NJPS). This also best explains "darkest gloom" (Jer 2:31), and "mighty deeds" (Jer 32:19) (see S. Moscati, Comparative Grammar, 81, §12.18, and 83, §12.23).

8 tn Heb "rivers."

9 tn Heb "all the wealth of his house."

10 th Heb "for love." The preposition בְּאֹרֶבְּה (ba'ahavah, "for love") indicates the price or exchange in trading (HALOT 105 s.v. בְּ 17), e.g., "Give me your vineyard in exchange for silver [בְּבֶבְ, b'khesef]" (1 kgs 21:6).

11 th Heb "he/it." The referent (the offer of possessions)

11 th Heb "he/it." The referent (the offer of possessions) has been specified in the translation for clarity. Some English versions take the referent to be the man himself (ASV "He would utterly be condemned"; NAB "he would be roundly mocked"). Others take the offer as the referent (cf. KJV, NASB, NIV, NRSV "it").

**12 tn** The root מבו, "to despise") is repeated for emphasis: בוו לביוו (buz, "to despise") is repeated for emphasis: שה יברוו (boz yavuzu). The infinitive absolute frequently is used with the imperfect of the same root for emphasis. The point is simply that love cannot be purchased; it is infinitely more valuable than any and all wealth. Love such as this is priceless; no price tag can be put on love.

13 sn The Beloved's brothers knew that once a couple is betrothed, sexual temptations would be at their greatest. Thus, in v. 9 they devise a plan to protect the purity of their sister: If she is a virtuous young woman, they would reward her; however, if she is prone to temptation, they will restrain her and guard her from promiscuity.

14 sn The simile if she is a wall draws a comparison between the impregnability of a city fortified with a strong outer wall and a virtuous young woman who successfully resists any assaults against her virginity. The term איים (khomah, "wall") often refers to an outside fortress wall that protects the city from enemy military attacks (e.g., Lev 25:29-30; Josh 6:5; 1 Kgs 3:1; Neh 2:8; 12:27; Jer 1:8; 15:20).

15 sn The term מְיְרָה (tirah, "battlement, turret") refers to the row of stones along the top of a fortress wall, set for the defense and stability of the wall (Ezek 46:23; cf. HALOT 374 s.v. (שִּירָה This structure is connected with military operations set in defense of a siege.

but if she is a door, we will barricade her with boards of cedar. 3

#### The Beloved:

8:10 I was a wall, and my breasts were like fortress towers.<sup>4</sup> Then I found favor<sup>5</sup> in his eyes.<sup>6</sup>

Solomon's Vineyard and the Beloved's Vineyard

#### The Beloved to Her Lover:

8:11 Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-Hamon;

he leased out<sup>7</sup> the vineyard to those who maintained it.

Each was to bring a thousand shekels of silver for its fruit.

8:12 My vineyard, which belongs to me, s is at my disposal alone. 10

The thousand shekels belong to you, O Solomon.

and two hundred shekels belong to those who maintain it for its fruit.

Epilogue: The Lover's Request and His Beloved's Invitation

#### The Lover to His Beloved:

8:13 O you who stay in the gardens, my companions are listening attentively for your voice;

let me be the one to12 hear it!13

#### The Beloved to Her Lover:

**8:14** Make haste, my beloved! Be like a gazelle or a young stag on the mountains of spices.

- ינור (tsur, "to surround, encircle, enclose") is often used in military contexts in reference to the siege or defense of a fortress city: (1) setting up military positions (siege walls) to surround a besieged city (e.g., lsa 29:3); (2) encircling and laying siege to a city (e.g., Deut 20:12, 19; 2 Sam 11:1; 1 Kgs 15:27; 16:17; 20:1; 2 Kgs 6:24-25; 17:5; 19:9; 24:11; 1 Chr 20:1; lsa 21:2; 29:3; Jer 21:4, 9; 32:2; 37:5; 39:1; Ezek 4:3; Dan 1:1); (3) enclosing a city with sentries (e.g., lsa 29:3); (4) shutting a person within a city (1 Sam 23:8; 2 Sam 20:15; 2 Kgs 16:5); and (5) barricading a city door shut to prevent the city from being broken into and conquered (e.g., Song 8:7) (HALOT 1015 s.v. 1):2).
- **2 tn** Heb "a board." The singular noun להה (lukha, "board, plank") may denote a singular of number or a collective.
- 3 sn An interesting semantic parallel involving the "door/bar" motif in ancient Near Eastern texts comes from an Assyrian charm against an enemy: "If he is a door, I will open your mouth; but if he is a bar, I will open your tongue." Obviously, the line in the Song is not an incantation; the formula is used in a love motif. Cited by J. Ebeling, "Aus dem Tagewerk eines assyrischen Zauberpriesters," MAOG 5 (1931): 19.
- לאָרָל (migdal, "tower") can refer to the watchtowers of a fortified city (2 Kgs 17:9; 18:8; 2 Chr 26:9), projecting median towers along the fortified city wall which were crucial to the defense of the city (2 Chr 14:6; 26:15; 32:5), or fortress towers in the countryside set for the defense of the land (Judg 9:52; 2 Chr 27:4; Ezek 27:11) (HALOT 544 s.v. ו בְּנֶדֶל (HALOT 544 s.v. ו בְּנֶדֶל (1) Comparison of sense and a comparison of sight: (1) Comparison of sense: She successfully defended her virginity and sexual purity from seduction, as fortress towers defended the city. (2) Comparison of sight: Just as the fortress towers along a city wall projected out at the corners of the wall, the Beloved's breasts finally developed into beautiful "towers" (see 8:8 when she had no breasts as a young girl).
- $^{\bf 5}$  tn Heb "peace." An eloquent wordplay is created by the use of the noun שַלוֹם (shalom, "peace, favor") in 8:10b and the name שַלוֹם (shelomoh, "Solomon") in 8:11a. The Beloved found "favor" (שִלמה) in the eyes of Solomon (שלמה). She won his heart because she was not only a beautiful young woman ("my breasts were like fortress towers"), but a virtuous woman ("I was a wall").
- 6 tn Heb "Then I became in his eyes as one who finds peace."

- \$ sn The term בָּרֶבּ (kerem, "vineyard") is used literally in 8:11 in reference to Solomon's physical vineyard, but in 8:12 it is used figuratively (hypocatastasis) in reference to the Beloved: בְּרֶבִּי (armi, "my vineyard"). Throughout the Song, the term ("vineyard") is used figuratively (Song 1:6; 2:15; 8:12). In 8:12 it is used in reference to either (1) herself, (2) her choice of whom to give herself to in love, or (3) her physical body. In contrast to Solomon's physical vineyard, whose fruit can be bought and sold (8:11), she is not for sale: She will only give herself freely to the one whom she chooses to love.
- **9 tn** Each of the three terms in this line has the 1st person common singular suffix which is repeated three times for emphasis: עַרְמָּי (karmi, "my vineyard"), יָשְׁ (shelli, "which belongs to me"), and יְבְּרֵי ( $l^p$ fama, "at my disposal"). In contrast to King Solomon, who owns the vineyard at Baal-Hamon and who can buy and sell anything in the vineyard that he wishes, she proclaims that her "vineyard" (= herself or her body) belongs to her alone. In contrast to the vineyard, which can be leased out, and its fruit, which can be bought or sold, her "vineyard" is not for sale. Her love must and is to be freely given.
- 10 tn Heb "[it is] before me." The particle יְבֹּנְי (l²fana) can denote "at the disposal of" (e.g., Gen 13:9; 20:15; 24:51; 34:10; 47:6; Jer 40:4; 2 Chr 14:6) (HALOT 9 א.בר בה 4.a.f). Similar to Akkadian ana pan "at the disposal of" (AHw 2:821.a, paragraph 20), the term is used in reference to a sovereign (usually a land-owner or king) who has full power over his property to dispose of as he wishes, e.g., "The whole country is at your disposal [יְלְבֶּנֶרְ /ˈʃaneka]" (Gen 13:9). In Song 8:12 the form יְבָּנֶר has the 1st person common singular suffix: "My vineyard, which belongs to me, is at my disposal."
- 11 tn The term מַקְשֵׁיבִּים (maqshivim) is in the Hiphil stem which denotes an intense desire to hear someone's voice, that is, to eagerly listen for someone's voice (e.g., Jer 6:17) (HALOT 1151 s.v. קשב ז). The participle functions verbally and denotes a continual, ongoing, durative action.
- 12 tc The editors of BHS suggests that נֵם אָנִי (gam 'ani, "me also") should be inserted. Although there is no textual evidence for the insertion, it seems clear that the 1st person common singular referent is emphatic in MT הַּשְּׁםִיעֵינִי (hashmi'mi, "Let me hear it!").
- **13 tn** The imperative הְשְׁבְּינְינִי (*hashmi'ini*) functions as a request. The lover asks his beloved to let him hear her beautiful voice (e.g., Song 2:14).

<sup>7</sup> tn Heb "gave."