Song of Songs

Song of Songs is a love poem. Most of it is in the form of songs sung by a man and a woman to and about each other. It is the Bible’s love song. And God still uses it to teach people about physical love. Through the centuries, most people have thought that Solomon wrote it, so sometimes it is called, “Song of Solomon”.

Song of Songs reveals the feelings of love a man and a woman have for each other. Its poetry describes the physical appearance of the two lovers. Because of this, some people have said that Song of Songs should not even be in the Bible. In fact, in many Jewish and Christian communities, children are not allowed to read it.

Others have interpreted Song of Songs in symbolic or non-physical ways. For example, many Jews have seen it as describing God’s relationship with his people. And many Christians have viewed it as an illustration of the relationship of Jesus and the church. Some have tried to force Song of Songs to fit into their own culture’s understanding of love and marriage. But no matter how it is used, Song of Songs is part of Scripture. And it clearly celebrates the physical attraction between a man and a woman. And the young lovers in the Song want to express their love for each other in marriage.

Song of Songs is about what love between a man and woman should be. In true love, the woman sings about her man. She expresses how much she loves him. In true love, the man sings about his woman. He tells everyone what she means to him. This man and woman are in love and full of passion for each other.

Song of Songs teaches us to be excited about the special person we have chosen as a husband or wife. A sign of true love is that we want to express our feelings about the one we love. Another sure sign is that we miss each other when we are apart. The Song of Songs speaks of love...

From the woman about the man she loves (1:1-6)
Between the man and the woman (1:7 – 2:7)
During a springtime visit (2:8-17)
From the woman about her lover (3:1-11)
From the man about his lover and her response (4:1 – 5:1)
From the woman with her responses to questions (5:2 – 6:3)
In the feelings of the man and the woman for each other (6:4 – 8:14)

1 Solomon’s Most Wonderful Song.

The Woman to the Man She Loves

Cover me with kisses, for your love is better than wine.
I love the sweet-smelling oil you put on, but just the thought of you is like the best perfume.
That’s why all the young women love you.

*1:1 Solomon’s Most Wonderful Song Or “The Most Wonderful Song Dedicated to Solomon.”
†1:3 just the thought of you Literally, “your name”. The name often meant everything about a person. Here, “name” may be used because it sounds like the word translated “sweet-smelling oil”.

4 Take me with you, my king.
Let's run away!
Take me to your bedroom.
There I will rejoice and be happy with you.
Your love is better than wine.
The young women have good reason to love you.

She Speaks to the Women

5 Women of Jerusalem,
I am dark and beautiful,
as dark as the black tents of Kedar
and as beautiful as the tent curtains of Salmah."‡
6 Don't look at how dark I am,
at how dark the sun has made me.
My brothers were angry with me.
They forced me to take care of their vineyards,
so I could not take care of myself."¶

She Speaks to Him

7 I love you with all my heart!
Tell me, where do you feed your sheep?
Where do you take them to rest at noon?
I want to be able to find you
without losing my way
among the flocks of your friends.

He Speaks to Her

8 You are such a beautiful woman.
Surely you know what to do.
Follow the tracks left by my sheep.
Feed your young goats near the shepherds' tents.
9 My love, you are more exciting to me
than any mare among the stallions§
pulling Pharaoh's chariots.**
10 Your cheeks are so beautiful
with those ornaments hanging beside them.
Your neck is so lovely
under that beautiful string of jewels.
11 Let's make you some more gold jewellery
and decorate it with silver.

She Speaks

12 The smell of my perfume reaches out
to the king lying on his couch.
13 My love is like the small bag of myrrh,
lying all night between my breasts.
14 My love is like a bunch of henna flowers
near the vineyards of En Gedi.

He Speaks

15 Oh, my love, you are beautiful!
You are so beautiful!
Your eyes are as pretty as doves.

She Speaks

16 And you, my love, are so handsome!
You are a delight to my heart!
Our bed here on the grass is so pleasant.
17 Cedar and fir trees surround us
and make a house over our heads.
2 I feel like a small flower in the fields
of Sharon
or like a lily in the valley.

He Speaks

2 My love, when I compare you to other women,
you are like a lily among thorns!

She Speaks

3 My love, compared to other men,

---

‡1:5 Kedar … Salmah Arabian tribes. For “Salmah” the traditional Hebrew text has “Solomon”. Both names use the same Hebrew consonants.
¶1:6 myself Literally, “my own vineyard”.
§1:9 mare … stallions Female and male horses. Only male horses were used to pull chariots.
**1:9 Literally, “To a mare among Pharaoh’s chariots I compare you, my love.”
you are an apple tree in the middle of the woods!
I love sitting here in its shade and enjoying the delicious fruit.
4 I am like a guest at your banquet, and you have shown me your love.
5 My desire for you makes me feel weak. So give me raisins for strength. Refresh me with apples.
6 Let my head rest in your left hand, while you hold me close with your right arm.
7 Promise me, women of Jerusalem, by the gazelles and wild deer,†† that you will not interfere with our love. Let it continue until it is finished.

A Springtime Visit
8 Listen! I hear my love coming. He is jumping across the mountains, skipping over the hills.
9 My love is like a gazelle or a young deer. Look, there he is behind our wall. He is trying to see in through the window, looking through the screen.
10 My love says to me, “Come, my love, my beautiful one! Come away with me.”
11 Look, winter is past, the rains have come and gone. The flowers are blooming in the fields.
12 The flowers are blooming in the fields. It’s time to sing!‡‡ Listen, the doves have returned.
13 Young figs are growing on the fig trees. Smell the vines in bloom. Get up, my love, my beautiful one. Let’s go away!”

He Speaks to Her
14 My dove, hiding in the caves high on the cliff, hidden here on the mountain, let me see you; let me hear your voice. Your voice is so pleasant, and you are so beautiful!

She Speaks to the Women
15 Catch the foxes for us— the little foxes that spoil the vineyard. Our vineyard is now in bloom.
16 My love is mine, and I am his! My love feeds among the lilies, until the day dawns and the darkness disappears. Go now, my love! Run like a gazelle or a young deer over the rugged mountains!¶¶

She Speaks
3 At night on my bed, I looked for the man I love. I looked for him, but I could not find him.
2 I will get up now! I will go around the city. In the streets and squares, I will look for the man I love. I looked for him, but I could not find him.
3 The guards patrolling the city found me. I asked them, “Have you seen the man I love?”
4 As soon as I passed them, I found the man I love!

††2:7 gazelles and wild deer Gazelles and deer often appear in the art of other ancient Near Eastern religions as companions of the goddess of love. Also in 3:5.
‡‡2:12 sing Or “prune”.
¶¶2:17 rugged mountains Literally, “mountains of Bether”. This could also mean “twin peaks” or “mountains of spice”.

††2:7 gazelles and wild deer Gazelles and deer often appear in the art of other ancient Near Eastern religions as companions of the goddess of love. Also in 3:5.
‡‡2:12 sing Or “prune”.
¶¶2:17 rugged mountains Literally, “mountains of Bether”. This could also mean “twin peaks” or “mountains of spice”.

††2:7 gazelles and wild deer Gazelles and deer often appear in the art of other ancient Near Eastern religions as companions of the goddess of love. Also in 3:5.
‡‡2:12 sing Or “prune”.
¶¶2:17 rugged mountains Literally, “mountains of Bether”. This could also mean “twin peaks” or “mountains of spice”.

††2:7 gazelles and wild deer Gazelles and deer often appear in the art of other ancient Near Eastern religions as companions of the goddess of love. Also in 3:5.
‡‡2:12 sing Or “prune”.
¶¶2:17 rugged mountains Literally, “mountains of Bether”. This could also mean “twin peaks” or “mountains of spice”.

††2:7 gazelles and wild deer Gazelles and deer often appear in the art of other ancient Near Eastern religions as companions of the goddess of love. Also in 3:5.
‡‡2:12 sing Or “prune”.
¶¶2:17 rugged mountains Literally, “mountains of Bether”. This could also mean “twin peaks” or “mountains of spice”.

††2:7 gazelles and wild deer Gazelles and deer often appear in the art of other ancient Near Eastern religions as companions of the goddess of love. Also in 3:5.
‡‡2:12 sing Or “prune”.
¶¶2:17 rugged mountains Literally, “mountains of Bether”. This could also mean “twin peaks” or “mountains of spice”.

††2:7 gazelles and wild deer Gazelles and deer often appear in the art of other ancient Near Eastern religions as companions of the goddess of love. Also in 3:5.
‡‡2:12 sing Or “prune”.
¶¶2:17 rugged mountains Literally, “mountains of Bether”. This could also mean “twin peaks” or “mountains of spice”.

††2:7 gazelles and wild deer Gazelles and deer often appear in the art of other ancient Near Eastern religions as companions of the goddess of love. Also in 3:5.
‡‡2:12 sing Or “prune”.
¶¶2:17 rugged mountains Literally, “mountains of Bether”. This could also mean “twin peaks” or “mountains of spice”.

††2:7 gazelles and wild deer Gazelles and deer often appear in the art of other ancient Near Eastern religions as companions of the goddess of love. Also in 3:5.
‡‡2:12 sing Or “prune”.
¶¶2:17 rugged mountains Literally, “mountains of Bether”. This could also mean “twin peaks” or “mountains of spice”.
I held him and would not let him go, until I took him to my mother's house, to the bedroom where my life began.

She Speaks to the Women

5 Promise me, women of Jerusalem, by the gazelles and wild deer, that you will not interfere with our love. Let it continue until it is finished.
6 What is this coming out of the desert? It looks like a big cloud of smoke. And it smells like myrrh and frankincense and the other spices traders sell.

Look, Solomon's travelling chair. There are 60 soldiers guarding it, strong soldiers of Israel.
8 All of them are trained fighting men with their swords at their side, ready for any danger of the night.
9 King Solomon had a travelling chair made for himself. The wood came from Lebanon.
10 The corner posts were made from silver, and the supports were made from gold. The seat was covered with purple cloth. The inside was lined with leather by the women of Jerusalem.

He Speaks to Her

4 My love, you are so beautiful! Oh, you are beautiful! Your eyes under your veil are as lovely as doves. Your hair is long and flowing, like little goats dancing down the slopes of Mount Gilead.
2 Your teeth are as white as sheep that are freshly sheared and washed. Not one is out of line; they are all perfectly matched.
3 Your lips are like a red silk thread. Your mouth is beautiful. Your cheeks under your veil are like slices of pomegranate.
4 Your neck is as beautiful as the tower of David, decorated with its rows of stones. It has a thousand shields on its walls, the shields of powerful soldiers.

Your breasts are as lovely as twin fawns, like twins of a gazelle feeding among the lilies.
6 I cannot wait to be on those lovely hills that smell of myrrh and frankincense. I will go now, before the day dawns, before the darkness goes away.
7 My love, you are beautiful all over. Every part of you is perfect.

8 Come away with me from Lebanon, my bride. Let us leave Lebanon behind. Come down from its high mountains, from the peaks of Mount Amana, from the peaks of Senir and Hermon. Come away from the lions’ caves, from the mountains where leopards live.
9 My bride, my dearest, you have stolen my heart with just one look from your eyes. A single sparkle from your necklace has put me under your control.
10 Your love is a delight, my bride, my dearest! Your love is better than wine.

---

§§3:7 travelling chair A kind of chair that the rich travelled in. It was covered and had poles that slaves used to carry it. Also in verse 9.
*3:11 crown This might be a wreath of flowers he wore on his head at his wedding.
†4:4 Your neck … stones This would mean she wore many necklaces, one above the other, which looked like rows of stones in a tower.
And the smell of your perfume
is more pleasing than any spice!

My bride, your lips are as sweet as
honey,
your kisses a delight, like honey and
milk.
Your clothes smell wonderful,
like the cedars of Lebanon.

My bride, my dearest, you are so
lovely,
like a private garden or a hidden spring,
like a fountain protected from strangers.

You are a royal garden
filled with pomegranates and other
choice fruits,
with all kinds of spices
like henna\(^{\text{\textsection}}\) and nard.

Besides nard there is saffron,\(^{\text{\textsection\textsection}}\) calamus\(^{\text{\textsection\textsection}}\) and cinnamon,\(^{**}\)
and trees that produce the best spices,
like frankincense, myrrh and aloes.

You are a garden fountain,
a spring of fresh water
that flows down from the mountains of
Lebanon.

She Speaks

Wake up, north wind.
Come, south wind.
Blow on my garden.
Spread its sweet smell.
Let my love enter his garden
and eat its pleasant fruit.

He Speaks

My bride, my dearest, I have entered
my garden.
I have gathered my myrrh and spice.
I have eaten my honey and honeycomb.
I have drunk my wine and milk.

The Women Speak to the Lovers

Dearest friends, eat, drink!
Be drunk with love!

She Speaks

I was asleep,
but my mind was awake.
I thought I heard my love knocking and
saying,
“Open up for me, my dearest, my love,
my dove, my perfect one!
My head is all wet with dew.
My hair is soaked from the evening
mist.”

But I said, “I have taken off my robe.
I don’t want to put it on again.
I have washed my feet.
I don’t want to get them dirty again.”

My love put his hand through the latch
opening,
and I began to feel excited.

I got up to let my love come in,
myrrh dripping from my hands.
Myrrh-scented lotion dripped from my
fingers
onto the handles of the door.

I opened the door for my love,
but he was already gone!
I was so sad,
I thought I would die.
I looked for him,
but I could not find him.
I called out for him,
but he did not answer.

The guards patrolling the city found
me.
They hit me and hurt me.
The guards on the wall
took away my robe.

----

\(^{\text{\textsection}}\)4:13 henna A plant with sweet-smelling, blue-yellow flowers that grows in clusters
groups) like grapes.

\(^{\text{\textsection\textsection}}\)4:14 saffron A kind of yellow flower used in making perfume.

\(^{\text{\textsection\textsection}}\)4:14 calamus A kind of reed plant used in making perfume.

\(^{**}\)4:14 cinnamon A kind of plant used as a spice and in making perfume.
8 Women of Jerusalem, promise me this: if you find my lover, tell him I am weak with love.

The Women of Jerusalem Answer Her

9 Most beautiful woman, how is the one you love different from other men? Is he better than all others? Is that why you ask us to make this promise?

She Answers

10 My love is tanned and radiant. He would stand out among 10,000 men.
11 His head is like the purest gold. His hair is curly and as black as a raven.
12 His eyes are like doves by a stream, like doves in a pool of milk, like a jewel in its setting.
13 His cheeks are like a garden of spices, like flowers used for perfume. His lips are like lilies,†† dripping with liquid myrrh.
14 His arms are like gold rods covered with jewels. His body is like smooth ivory decorated with blue gems.
15 His legs are like marble pillars on bases of fine gold. He stands tall, like the finest cedar tree in Lebanon!
16 His kisses are so sweet; he is everything I desire. Yes, women of Jerusalem, this is my love, my friend.

The Women of Jerusalem Speak to Her

6 Most beautiful woman, where is the one you love?

Which way did he go? Tell us so that we can help you look for him.

She Answers the Women

2 My love has gone down to his garden, where sweet-smelling spices grow. There, like a sheep, he will eat the grass, and he will enjoy the lilies.
3 I belong to my love, and he belongs to me. He is the one feeding among the lilies.

He Speaks to Her

4 My love, you are as beautiful as Jerusalem, as lovely as the city of Tirzah,†‡ as breathtaking as the stars in the sky.¶¶
5 Don’t look at me! Your eyes excite me too much! And your hair bounces playfully, like goats dancing down the slopes of Mount Gilead.
6 Your teeth are white as sheep that are freshly sheared and washed. Not one is out of line; they are all perfectly matched.
7 Your cheeks under your veil are like slices of pomegranate.
8 Some kings might have 60 queens, 80 slave women and even more young women.
9 But only one, my lovely dove, is perfect for me. She is her mother’s favourite, the child she loved most. The young women see her and praise her. Even the queens and slave women praise her:
10 “Who is this young woman

††5:13 lilies A kind of flower. Here, they are probably red.
‡‡6:4 Tirzah One of the capital cities of northern Israel.
¶¶6:4 the stars in the sky Or “an army with flags flying”. The meaning of the Hebrew word here and in verse 10 is uncertain.
who shines like the dawn?
She is as pretty as the moon,
as bright as the sun,
as breathtaking as the stars in the sky.”

I went down to the grove of walnut
trees.
I wanted to see the new spring growth in
the valley,
to see if the vines were budding
or the pomegranate trees blooming.

Before I knew it,
she had put me in a wonderful royal
chariot.

Come back, come back, O perfect one!
Come back so I§§ can look at you.

The Woman Speaks
Why do you want to look at me
as I dance between the rows of dancers?*

He Praises Her Beauty
Princess,† your feet are beautiful in
those sandals.
The curves of your thighs are like jew-
ellery made by an artist.
Your navel is like a round cup;‡
may it never be without wine.
Your belly is like a pile of wheat
surrounded by lilies.
Your breasts are like twin fawns
of a young gazelle.
Your neck is as graceful as an ivory
tower.
Your eyes sparkle like the pools in
Heshbon
near the gate of Bath Rabbim.

Your nose has such a beautiful shape,
like Mount Lebanon seen from
Damascus.
Your head is held high, like Mount
Carmel.
Your hair is like silk.
Its waves look so attractive,
it could capture even a king.
You are so beautiful and so pleasant,
a lovely, delightful young woman!
You are tall—
as tall as a palm tree.
And your breasts are like
the clusters of fruit on that tree.
I would love to climb that tree
and take hold of its branches.
May your breasts be like clusters of
grapes,
your breath like the sweet smell of
apples,
and your lips like the best wine.

She Speaks to Him
So let this wine flow straight to my love,
flowing gently over lips and teeth.§

I belong to the one I love,
and he desires only me.
Come, my love,
let’s go out to the fields
and spend the night in the countryside.
Let’s get up early and go to the
vineyards.
Let’s see if the vines are budding yet.
Let’s see if the blossoms have opened
and the pomegranate trees are in bloom.
There I will give you my love.

§§6:13 I Literally, “we”.
*6:13 as … dancers The meaning of this line in Hebrew is uncertain.
†7:1 Princess Literally, “Daughter of a prince”.
‡7:2 round cup Or “turned bowl”, a stone bowl made on a lathe and used for mix-
ing wine before it is poured into cups. This might also mean a bowl shaped like a
crescent or half-moon.
§7:9 over lips and teeth This follows the Greek, Syriac and Latin versions. The He-
brew text has “over lips of sleepers”.


13 You can smell the mandrakes, §
and all kinds of delicious fruits
that are stored over our door.
I have saved many pleasant things for
you, my love,
pleasant things, old and new.

8 If only you were my brother
who nursed at my mother’s breasts.
Then, if I met you outside, I could kiss
you,
and no one would say I did wrong.

2 I would lead you to the house of my
mother,
where you could teach me about love.
I would give you spiced wine
squeezed from my pomegranates.

She Speaks to the Women

3 His left arm is under my head,
and his right hand holds me.

4 Promise me, women of Jerusalem,
that you will not interfere with our love.
Let it continue until it is finished.

The Women of Jerusalem Speak

5 Who is this woman coming out of the
desert,
leaning on the arm of the one she loves?

She Speaks to Him

There under the apple tree, I woke you
up.
That was where your life began,
where your mother gave birth to you.

6 Keep me near you like a seal over your
heart,
like a signet ring you wear on your hand.
Love is as strong as death.
It produces feelings as strong as the
grave.
Its sparks become a flame
that grows into a raging fire!

7 Even a flood cannot put it out;
rivers cannot drown it.
No one can buy love,
no matter how much they offer.
They would get nothing but hate.

8 My brothers once said, “We have a little
sister
whose breasts are not yet formed.
What should we do
when someone asks to marry her?

9 If she looks like a wall,
we will decorate it with silver.
If she looks like a door,
we will use cedar to make it more
attractive.”

10 Yes, compare me to a wall,
and my breasts are its towers.
So when my love sees me,
he is very pleased.

11 Solomon had a vineyard at Baal
Hamon.
He rented it for others to take care of,
and each of them paid 1000 pieces**
of silver
for the harvest of grapes.

12 Solomon can keep his silver,
and those who cared for the grapes can
have 200 pieces,
but my vineyard is my own to keep or
give.

He Speaks to Her

13 There you are, sitting in the garden.
My friends are listening for your voice.
Let me hear it!

She Speaks to Him

14 Hurry, my love! Run like a gazelle
or a young deer on the mountains cov-
ered with spices.

---

§7:13 mandrakes A plant that was used to strengthen sexual desire. The Hebrew
word is similar to the word meaning “to make love”. The roots had a human form,
and people thought they could help women get pregnant. Also called “love apple”.
See Gen. 30:14-16.

*8:11 pieces Literally, “shekels”. Also in verse 12.