

SONG OF SONGS 4:1 - 5:1

He admires her beauty (4:1-7)

**¹How beautiful you are, my love, how very beautiful! Your eyes are doves behind your veil. Your hair is like a flock of goats, streaming down the slopes of Gilead.
²Your teeth are like a flock of shorn ewes that have come up from the washing. All of them in pairs, none missing.
³Your lips are like a crimson thread, and your mouth, lovely. Your cheeks are like halves of a pomegranate behind your veil.**

**⁴Your neck is like the tower of David, built in courses; on it hang a thousand bucklers, all of them shields of warriors.
⁵Your breasts are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle, browsing among the lilies.**

⁶Until the day breathes and the shadows flee, I will hasten to the mountain of myrrh and the hill of frankincense.

⁷You are altogether beautiful, my love; no blemish in you.

It is the wedding night. He is admiring her beauty. His opening words echo 1:15. The image of a 'veil' evokes the sense of concealment and the excitement of discovery. He must uncover her to see her beauty. He is excited by her dark hair cascading down her neck and breasts, like black goats frolicking on the slopes of Gilead. The imagery moves from that of black goats to white sheep washed clean as they come up out of the water - shining white and in pairs, just like the intact set of teeth revealed by her alluring smile.

Her crimson lips and the beauty of her mouth invite the kisses already featured in the opening poem (1:2). As his tongue probes the inside of her cheeks he thinks of the sweet taste of the pomegranate – a symbol also of fertility because of the profusion of its seeds. The second allusion to the 'veil' adds to the mystery and his arousal to search deeper into her as yet inaccessible beauty.

David (dāwîd) echoes the endearing term she regularly uses when addressing him: 'my lover'(dôdî). Warriors would hang their hand shields (bucklers) and the larger body shields on the battlements of the tower giving the tower an appearance of ornate splendour. The image is evoked by her layered necklace (compare 1:9).

Her breasts are compared to a pair of gazelle fawns 'feeding among the lilies'(compare 2:1-2).

His longing to be with her throughout the night echoes her longing (see 2:17). The 'mountain of myrrh and the hill of frankincense' seem to allude to her breasts (recall 1:13). He is intoxicated by her allurements and is hastening to complete the union he desires.

She is perfect in every way.

He invites her to union (4:8-14)

Again it is the man who speaks, expressing first his yearning. Amana, Senir and Hermon are peaks in the Anti-Lebanon range, unapproachable because of the dense forest, the lair of wild animals. Is there also an allusion to the Assyrian goddess Ishtar, frequently pictured with lions and leopards? As earlier she was hidden from him in the clefts of the rock (2:14), so here she must leave her secret lair and come to him.

In an ecstasy of lovemaking all his senses are aroused: his sight, taste, smell and touch. Just as earlier she was faint from the sensation of love (2:5), so here he is a 'prisoner', ravished by her love. She spoke of his love as better than wine (see 1:2). Her love is the same for him (verse 10). Earlier she spoke of his presence in terms of the fragrance of spiced oils (1:3). The experience is the same for him (verses 10-11).

He speaks of the nectar of her kisses. The 'scent of Lebanon' carries extra meaning in the Hebrew through the likeness in sound of 'Lebanon' (lebānôn) and frankincense (lebōnâ), the most precious of spices.

In a sustained metaphor (4:12 - 5:1), he compares her to an enclosed garden with a fountain at the centre. Only she can unlock the gate to the garden and permit entry – which she is doing now for him, inviting him to break the seal into the channel that leads to the 'paradise' [פֶּרְדֵּס, pērdēs - a Persian loan word] where flows the hidden life-giving spring. The pomegranate is an aphrodisiac, a symbol of fertility (see 4:3). The other exotic herbs are noted for their aroma.

She responds (4:15-16)

She offers him her 'garden' and calls on the winds to fan the perfumes of the garden so that he will enjoy his entry to the full. She offers herself, her 'choicest fruits' to him for his pleasure.

⁸Come with me from Lebanon, my bride; come with me from Lebanon. Come down from the peak of Amana, from the heights of Senir and Hermon, from the dens of lions, from the mountains of leopards.

⁹You have ravished my heart, my sister, my bride, you have ravished my heart with a glance of your eyes, with one bead of your necklace.

¹⁰How sweet is your love, my sister, my bride! how much better is your love than wine, and the fragrance of your oils than any spice!

¹¹Your lips distill nectar, my bride; honey and milk are under your tongue; the fragrance of your garments is like the fragrance of Lebanon.

¹²A garden enclosed my sister, my bride, a garden enclosed, a fountain sealed. ¹³Your channel is a paradise of pomegranates with all choicest fruits, henna with nard, ¹⁴nard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, with every scented tree. Myrrh and aloes, with all the finest spices.

¹⁵A garden fountain, a well of life giving water, flowing from Lebanon. ¹⁶Arise, north wind, and come, south wind! Blow upon my garden that its fragrance may be wafted abroad. Let my lover come to his garden, and eat its choicest fruits.

Song of Songs

^{5:1}**I have come to my garden,
my sister, my bride; I gather
my myrrh with my spices. I
eat my honeycomb with my
honey, I drink my wine with
my milk.**

**Eat, friends, drink, drink
deeply of love.**

He responds and enters (5:1a)

He welcomes her invitation: 'I have come ... I
gather ... I eat ... I drink'.

The chorus (5:1b)

The chorus applauds their lovemaking.

We hear the call of Isaiah:

Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters;
and you that have no money,
come, buy and eat!
Come, buy wine and milk
without money and without price.
Why do you spend your money
for that which is not bread,
and your labour
for that which does not satisfy?
Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good,
and delight yourselves in rich food.
Incline your ear, and come to me;
listen, so that you may live.
I will make with you an everlasting covenant.

– Isaiah 55:1-3