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## Behold, You Are Beautiful My Love

Lee Magness  
jlmagness@milligan.edu

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# BEHOLD, YOU ARE BEAUTIFUL, MY LOVE

## A Reading from the Song of Songs

LEE MAGNESS

*This reading<sup>1</sup> lets the beautiful Song of Songs speak for itself in the voices of a man and a woman celebrating their physical attraction and committed love for each other. The language is sexually explicit, but their love is more than erotic; it is the "flame of the Lord."*

Woman        Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth!  
                  Draw me after you; let us run.  
I am very dark, but lovely,  
                  because the sun has looked upon me.  
Tell me, you whom my soul loves,  
                  where you pasture your flock,  
                                  where you make it lie down at noon?        (1.2-7)

Man            If you do not know, O most beautiful among women,  
                  follow in the tracks of the flock.  
I compare you, my love, to a mare among Pharaoh's chariots.  
                  Your cheeks are lovely with ornaments,  
                                  your neck with strings of jewels.

Woman        While the king was on his couch,  
                  my nard gave forth its fragrance.  
My beloved is to me a sachet of myrrh  
                  that lies between my breasts.

Man            Behold, you are beautiful, my love;  
                  behold, you are beautiful; your eyes are doves.  
Behold, you are beautiful, my beloved, truly delightful.        (1.8-17)

Woman        I am a rose of Sharon, a lily of the valleys.

Man            As a lily among brambles,  
                  so is my love among the young women.

Woman        As an apple tree among the trees of the forest,  
                  so is my beloved among the young men.  
With great delight I sat in his shadow,  
                  and his fruit was sweet to my taste.  
He brought me to the banqueting house,  
                  and his banner over me was love.  
His left hand is under my head,  
                  and his right hand embraces me!        (2.1-7)

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1. Quotations from the English Standard Version

The voice of my beloved! Behold, he comes,  
leaping over the mountains, bounding over the hills.  
My beloved speaks and says to me:

Man Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come away,  
for behold, the winter is past; the rain is over and gone.  
The flowers appear on the earth, the time of singing has come,  
and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land.  
Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come away.

Woman My beloved is mine, and I am his;  
he grazes among the lilies.  
Until the day breathes and the shadows flee,  
turn, my beloved, be like a gazelle  
or a young stag on cleft mountains. (2.8–17)

Man Behold, you are beautiful, my love,  
behold, you are beautiful!  
Your eyes are doves behind your veil.  
Your hair is like a flock of goats  
leaping down the slopes of Gilead.  
Your teeth are like a flock of shorn ewes  
that have come up from the washing, all of which bear twins,  
and not one among them has lost its young.  
Your lips are like a scarlet thread, and your mouth is lovely.  
Your cheeks are like halves of a pomegranate behind your veil.  
Your neck is like the tower of David, built in rows of stone,  
on it hang a thousand shields, all of them shields of warriors.  
Your two breasts are like two fawns,  
twins of a gazelle, that graze among the lilies.  
I will go away to the mountain of myrrh and the hill of frankincense.

You are altogether beautiful, my love;  
there is no flaw in you.  
You have captivated my heart, my sister, my bride;  
you have captivated my heart with one glance of your eyes.  
How beautiful is your love, my sister, my bride!  
Your lips drip nectar, my bride;  
honey and milk are under your tongue.  
A garden locked is my sister, my bride,  
a spring locked, a fountain sealed.  
a garden fountain, a well of living water. (4.1–15)

Woman Awake, O north wind, and come, O south wind!  
Blow upon my garden, let its spices flow.  
Let my beloved come to his garden,  
and eat its choicest fruits. (4.9–16)

Man I came to my garden, my sister, my bride,

- I gathered my myrrh with my spice,  
I ate my honeycomb with my honey,  
I drank my wine with my milk. (5.1)
- Woman I slept, but my heart was awake.  
A sound! My beloved is knocking. (5.2)
- Man Open to me, my sister, my love,  
my dove, my perfect one,  
for my head is wet with dew,  
my locks with the drops of the night.
- Woman I had put off my garment; how could I put it on?  
I had bathed my feet; how could I soil them?  
My beloved put his hand to the latch,  
and my heart was thrilled within me.  
I arose to open to my beloved, and my hands dripped with myrrh,  
my fingers with liquid myrrh, on the handles of the bolt.  
I opened to my beloved,  
but my beloved had turned and gone.  
My soul failed me when he spoke. I sought him, but found him not;  
I called him, but he gave no answer.  
My beloved is radiant and ruddy,  
distinguished among ten thousand.  
His head is the finest gold;  
his locks are wavy, black as a raven.  
His eyes are like doves beside streams of water,  
bathed in milk, sitting beside a full pool.  
His cheeks are like beds of spices, mounds of sweet-smelling herbs.  
His lips are lilies, dripping liquid myrrh.  
His arms are rods of gold, set with jewels.  
His body is polished ivory, bedecked with sapphires.  
His legs are alabaster columns, set on bases of gold.  
His mouth is most sweet, and he is altogether desirable.  
This is my beloved and this is my friend. (5.3–16)
- My beloved has gone down to his garden to the beds of spices,  
to graze in the gardens and to gather lilies.  
I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine;  
he grazes among the lilies. (6.1–3)
- Man Turn away your eyes from me, for they overwhelm me—  
My dove, my perfect one, is the only one,  
the only one of her mother, pure to her who bore her.  
Who is this who looks down like the dawn,  
beautiful as the moon, bright as the sun,  
awesome as an army with banners? (6.5–10)
- Woman I went down to the nut orchard  
to look at the blossoms of the valley,

to see whether the vines had budded,  
whether the pomegranates were in bloom.  
Before I was aware, my desire set me  
among the chariots of my kinsman, a prince. (6.11–12)

Man How beautiful are your feet in sandals, O noble daughter!  
Your rounded thighs are like jewels, the work of a master hand.  
Your navel is a rounded bowl that never lacks mixed wine.  
Your belly is a heap of wheat, encircled with lilies.  
Your two breasts are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle.  
Your neck is like an ivory tower.  
Your eyes are pools. Your nose is like a tower of Lebanon.  
Your head crowns you like Carmel,  
and your flowing locks are like purple;  
a king is held captive in the tresses.  
How beautiful and pleasant you are,  
O loved one, with all your delights!  
Your stature is like a palm tree,  
and your breasts are like its clusters.  
I say I will climb the palm tree and lay hold of its fruit.  
Oh may your breasts be like clusters of the vine,  
and the scent of your breath like apples,  
and your mouth like the best wine. (7.1–9)

Woman I am my beloved's,  
and his desire is for me.  
Come, my beloved, let us go out into the fields  
and lodge in the villages;  
let us go out early to the vineyards  
and see whether the vines have budded,  
whether the grape blossoms have opened  
and the pomegranates are in bloom.  
There I will give you my love. (7.10–12)

Man and Woman Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm,  
for love is strong as death, jealousy is fierce as the grave.  
Its flashes are flashes of fire, the very flame of the LORD.  
Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it.

Man If a man offered for love all the wealth of his house,  
he would be utterly despised. (8.6–7)

Woman Make haste, my beloved, and be like a gazelle  
or a young stag on the mountains of spices. (8.14)