

SONG 6: 1 Where has your beloved gone, you fairest among women? Where has your beloved turned, that we may seek him with you? Beloved.

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The companions of the bride inquire after the bridegroom, Sol 6:1-3. A description of the bride, Sol 6:4-13.

Verse 1

Whither is thy beloved gone - These words are supposed to be addressed to the bride by her own companions, and are joined to the preceding chapter by the Hebrew and all the versions.

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SONG 6: 2 My beloved has gone down to his garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies.

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Verse 2

My beloved is gone down into his garden - The answer of the bride to her companions.

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SONG 6: 3 I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine. He browses among the lilies,

SONG 6: 4 You are beautiful, my love, as Tirzah, lovely as Jerusalem, awesome as an army with banners.

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Verse 4

Beautiful - as Tirzah - This is supposed to be the address of Solomon to the bride. Tirzah was a city in the tribe of Ephraim, (Jos 12:24), and the capital of that district. It appears to have been beautiful in itself, and beautifully situated, for Jeroboam made it his residence before Samaria was built; and it seems to have been the ordinary residence of the kings of Israel, 1Kgs 14:17; 1Kgs 15:21. Its same signifies beautiful or delightful.

Comely as Jerusalem - This was called the perfection of beauty, Psa 48:2, Psa 48:3; Psa 50:2. And thus the poet compares the bride's beauty to the two finest places in the land of Palestine, and the capitals of the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah.

Terrible as an army with banners - This has been supposed to carry an allusion to the caravans in the East, and the manner in which they are conducted in their travels by night. The caravans are divided into companies, called cottors, according to Thevenet; and each company is distinguished by the form of the brazier in which they carry their lights. After night, these braziers are placed on the ends of long poles, and carried by a person who walks at the head of the company. Some have ten or twelve lights, and are of different forms; some triangular, or like an N; some like an M, by which each pilgrim readily knows his own company, both by night and day. A whole caravan, composed of many thousands of hadgees or pilgrims, divided into various cottors or companies, each having its

own distinguishing brazier or light, must necessarily produce a very splendid, if not a terrible, appearance.

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SONG 6: 5 Turn away your eyes from me, for they have overcome me. Your hair is like a flock of goats, that lie along the side of Gilead.

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Verse 5

Turn away thine eyes - As the sight of so many fires after night was extremely dazzling, and the eye could not bear the sight, so the look of the bride was such as pierced the heart, and quite overwhelmed the person who met it. Hence the bridegroom naturally cries out, "Turn away thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me."

Thy hair is as a flock of goats - See on Sol 4:1 (note).

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SONG 6: 6 Your teeth are like a flock of ewes, which have come up from the washing; of which every one has twins; no one is bereaved among them.

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Verse 6

Thy teeth - See on Sol 4:2 (note).

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SONG 6: 7 Your temples are like a piece of a pomegranate behind your veil.

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Verse 7

As a piece of a pomegranate - See on Sol 4:3 (note).

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SONG 6: 8 There are sixty queens, eighty concubines, and virgins without number.

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Verse 8

There are threescore queens - Though there be sixty queens, and eighty concubines, or secondary wives, and virgins innumerable, in my harem, yet thou, my dove, my undefiled, art אַחַת achath, One, the Only One, she in whom I delight beyond all.

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SONG 6: 9 My dove, my perfect one, is unique. She is her mother's only daughter. She is the favourite one of her who bore her. The daughters saw her, and called her blessed; the queens and the concubines, and they praised her.

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Verse 9

The daughters saw her, and blessed her - Not only the Jewish women in general spoke well of her on her arrival, but the queens and concubines praised her as the most accomplished of her sex.

With this verse the fourth night of the marriage week is supposed to end.

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SONG 6: 10 Who is she who looks out as the morning, beautiful as the moon, clear as the sun, and awesome as an army with banners?

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Verse 10

Looketh forth as the morning - The bride is as lovely as the dawn of day, the Aurora, or perhaps the morning star, Venus. She is even more resplendent, she is as beautiful as the Moon. She even surpasses her, for she is as clear and bright as the Sun; and dangerous withal to look on, for she is as formidable as the vast collection of lights that burn by night at the head of every company in a numerous caravan. See the note on Sol 6:4 (note). The comparison of a fine woman to the splendor of an unclouded full moon is continually recurring in the writings of the Asiatic poets.

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SONG 6: 11 I went down into the nut tree grove, to see the green plants of the valley, to see whether the vine budded, and the pomegranates were in flower.

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Verse 11

I went down into the garden of nuts - I believe this and the following verse refer at least to the preparations for a farther consummation of the marriage, or examination of the advancement of the bride's pregnancy. But many circumstances of this kind are so interwoven, and often anticipated and also postponed, that it is exceedingly difficult to arrange the whole so as to ascertain the several parts, and who are the actors and speakers. But other writers find no difficulty here, because they have their system; and that explains all things.

It is probably not the hazel but the almond nut, that is referred to here.

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SONG 6: 12 Without realising it, my desire set me with my royal people's chariots. Friends.

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Verse 12

The chariots of Amminadib - Probably for their great speed these chariots became proverbial. The passage marks a strong agitation of mind, and something like what we term palpitation of the heart. As I am not aware of any spiritual meaning here, I must be excused from commenting on that which is literal. Amminadib signifies my noble or princely people; but it may here be a proper name, and Amminadib might be celebrated for his skill and rapidity in driving, as Jehu was.

SONG 6: 13 Return, return, Shulammitte! Return, return, that we may gaze at you. Lover. Why do you desire to gaze at the Shulammitte, as at the dance of Mahanaim?

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Verse 13

Return, O Shulamite - This appears to be addressed to the bride, as now the confirmed, acknowledged wife of Solomon; for שולמית shulammith, appears to be a feminine formed from שלמה shelomoh, or Nwmlv shelomon, as we form Charlotte from Charles; Henrietta, from Henry; Janette, from John, etc.

The company of two armies - Or the musicians of the camps. She is as terrible as hosts of armed men, on the ground of what is said on Sol 6:4, Sol 6:5. The two armies may refer to the choirs of the bride's virgins, and the bridegroom's companions; but the similitude is not very perceptible. The Targum explains it of "the camps of Israel and Judah:" as if the bridegroom should say, "My beloved possesses all the perfections both of the Israelitish and Jewish women." But how little satisfaction do the best conjectures afford!

With this chapter the fifth night is supposed to end.