

Erotic Lovers in the “Song of Songs”



The Song of Solomon by William Russell Flint, 1909. / Public Domain

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Selections from the “Song of Songs”

Woman for her groom: Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth! For your love is better than wine, your anointing oils are fragrant, your name is perfume poured out. . . . Draw me after you, let us make haste. The king has brought me into his chambers (1:1–4).

Man for his bride: How beautiful you are, my love, how very beautiful! Your eyes are doves behind your veil. Your hair is like a flock of goats. . . . Your lips are like a crimson thread, and your mouth is lovely. Your cheeks are like halves of a pomegranate behind your veil. . . . Your two breasts are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle, that feed among the lilies. . . .

A garden locked is my sister, my bride, a garden locked, a fountain sealed. Your channel is an orchard of pomegranates with all choicest fruits . . . a garden fountain, a well of living water, and flowing streams. . . .

Awake, O north wind, and come, O south wind! Blow upon my garden that its fragrance may be wafted abroad. Let my beloved come to his garden, and eat its choicest fruits. . . . I come to my garden, my sister, my bride; I gather my myrrh with my spice, I eat my honeycomb with my honey, I drink my wine with my milk. Eat, friends, drink, and be drunk with love (4:1–16; 5:1).

Woman for her groom: My beloved is all 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 springs of water, bathed in milk, fitly set. His cheeks are like beds of spices, yielding fragrance. His lips are lilies, distilling liquid myrrh. His arms are rounded gold, set with jewels. His body is ivory work, encrusted with sapphires. His legs are alabaster columns, set upon bases of gold.

His appearance is like Lebanon, choice as the cedars. His speech is most sweet, and he is altogether desirable. This is my beloved (5:10–16).

Man for his bride: How graceful are your feet in sandals, O queenly maiden! Your rounded thighs are like jewels, the work of a master hand. Your navel is a rounded bowl that never lacks mixed wine. . . . Your two breasts are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle. . . . Your head crowns you like Carmel, and your flowing locks are like purple. . . .

How fair and pleasant you are, O loved one, delectable maiden! You are stately as a palm tree, and your breasts are like its clusters. I say I will climb the palm tree and lay hold of its branches. O may your breasts be like clusters of the vine, and the scent of your breath like apples, and your kisses like the best wine that goes down smoothly, gliding over lips and teeth (7:1–9).

Woman for their love: Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm; for love is strong as death, passion fierce as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire, a raging flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it (8:6–7).

I [charge you, young women and men], do not stir up or awaken love until it is ready (8:4)!

For reflection and conversation

1. What do you notice in Flint’s painting?
2. How does this image speak to you?
3. What is attractive that you appreciate? Why?
4. What is questionable or troubling to you? Why?

- Steve Thomas