

Song of Songs 2

Woman:

¹I am a rose of Sharon,
a lily of the valleys.

Man:

² As a lily among brambles,
so is my love among maidens.

Woman:

³ As an apple tree among the trees of the wood,
so is my beloved among young men.

With great delight I sat in his shadow,
and his fruit was sweet to my taste.

⁴ He brought me to the banqueting house,
and his intention towards me was love.

⁵ Sustain me with raisins,
refresh me with apples;
for I am faint with love.

⁶ O that his left hand were under my head,
and that his right hand embraced me!

⁷ I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem,
by the gazelles or the wild does:
do not stir up or awaken love
until it is ready!

⁸ The voice of my beloved!
Look, he comes,
leaping upon the mountains,
bounding over the hills.

⁹ My beloved is like a gazelle
or a young stag.
Look, there he stands
behind our wall,
gazing in at the windows,
looking through the lattice.

¹⁰ My beloved speaks and says to me:

'Arise, my love, my fair one,
and come away;

¹¹ for now the winter is past,
the rain is over and gone.

¹² The flowers appear on the earth;
the time of singing has come,
and the voice of the turtle-dove
is heard in our land.

¹³ The fig tree puts forth its figs,
and the vines are in blossom;
they give forth fragrance.

Arise, my love, my fair one,
and come away.

¹⁴ O my dove, in the clefts of the rock,
in the covert of the cliff,
let me see your face,

let me hear your voice;
for your voice is sweet,
and your face is lovely.

¹⁵ Catch us the foxes,
the little foxes,
that ruin the vineyards—

for our vineyards are in blossom.'

¹⁶ My beloved is mine and I am his;
he pastures his flock among the lilies.

¹⁷ Until the day breathes
and the shadows flee,
turn, my beloved, be like a gazelle
or a young stag on the cleft mountains.

Meditation

This is an extended meditation on love as being as natural as creation itself, a living force with rhythms like the seasons. Building upon the imagery of the garden in the first chapter, this poem might be called “an ode to spring.” The woman begins by comparing herself to the first flowers of spring; the man responds by comparing her to the first flower blooming among non-flowering plants; then she compares him to a fruit tree bearing fruit and providing shade among “wild trees.” She remembers her lover calling to her with the beautifully familiar words that have become part of our literary vocabulary: “*for now 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 turtle-dove is heard in our land.* (2:11-12). She imagines him coming to her like the most graceful of animals, a gazelle or young stag, who emerges from the darkness of winter with gleeful freedom, both strong and vulnerable. Throughout this song is a rhythm of counterpointing images of disruption and comfort, confidence and longing, wildness and protection, elusiveness and union. “*I belong to my love, and he belongs to me*” (2:16): Repeated later in the Song, this is a statement both of defiance—asserting that the bonds of love are deeper than the bonds of family or clan—and of mutuality—in direct contrast to the estrangement faced by Adam and Eve. Our relationships—with God and with each other—have the same cycles of light and darkness, solitude and union, stillness and movement, silence and song, that we find in the world around us. The Song of Songs calls us to trust in the life that will always emerge as surely as spring follows winter (*do not stir up or awaken love / until it is ready!* [2:7])