



## The Writings May 6, 2020

# Shir HaShirim

### Shir HaShirim 1: 1-4

שִׁיר הַשִּׁירִים אֲשֶׁר לְשִׁלְמֹה:  
 יִשְׁקֵנִי מִנְּשִׁיקוֹת פִּיהוּ כִּי־טוֹבִים דְּדִיר מִיַּיִן:  
 לְרִיחַ שְׁמֵנֶיךָ טוֹבִים שְׁמֹן תּוֹרֵק שְׁמֶךָ עַל־כֵּן עֲלָמוֹת אֶהְבֹּוךָ:  
 מִשְׁכְּנֵי אַחֲרֶיךָ נְרוֹצָה הִבִּיאֵנִי הַמֶּלֶךְ חֲדַר יוֹ נְגִילָה וְנִשְׁמַחָה בְּךָ נִזְפִּירָה דְּדִיר מִיַּיִן מִיִּשְׁרַיִם אֶהְבֹּוךָ:

The Song of Songs, by Solomon.  
 Oh, give me of the kisses of your mouth,  
 For your love is more delightful than wine.  
 Your ointments yield a sweet fragrance,  
 Your name is like finest oil— Therefore do maidens love you.  
 Draw me after you, let us run!  
 The king has brought me to his chambers.  
 Let us delight and rejoice in your love,  
 Savoring it more than wine— Like new wine they love you!

### **Shir HaShirim 6: 1-3**

אָנָּה הֲלַךְ דּוֹדְךָ הַיְפָה בְּנָשִׁים אָנָּה פָּנָה דּוֹדְךָ וַיִּבְקֶשְׁנוּ עִמָּךְ:  
 דּוֹדִי יָרַד לְגַנוֹ לְעֵרְוֹגוֹת הַבָּשָׂם לְרֵעוֹת בְּגַנִּים וְלִלְקֹט שׁוֹשְׁנִים:  
 אֲנִי לְדוֹדִי וְדוֹדִי לִי הֲרַעָה בְּשׁוֹשְׁנִים:

“Whither has your beloved gone, O fairest of women? Whither has your beloved turned?  
 Let us seek him with you.” My beloved has gone down to his garden, To the beds of  
 spices, To browse in the gardens And to pick lilies.  
 I am my beloved’s And my beloved is mine; He browses among the lilies.



## **Strong as Death is Love - Robert Alter**

The extraordinary variegation of the books of the Hebrew Bible in style, genre and outlook, is one of the most exciting aspects of this anthology that spans nearly a millennium. But even against that background, the Song of Songs stands out in its striking distinctiveness - a distinctiveness that deserves to be called wondrous. The delicate yet frank sensuality of this celebration of young love, without reference to God or covenant or Torah, has lost nothing of its immediate freshness over the centuries: these are among the most beautiful love poems that have come down to us from the whole ancient world.

- 1) ["Dodi Li" by Deborah Sacks Mintz with the Hadar Ensemble](#)
- 2) [Dodi Li- Peter, Paul and Mary](#)
- 3) [Nava Tehila - Mi Zot Ola נאוה תהילה - מי זאת עולה](#)
- 4) [The Revivo Project - Shir HaShirim Medley Video | קליפ שיר השירים - מחרוזת "שיר השירים" | קליפ](#)





## Introduction to Shir HaShirim - Ibn Ezra (12th century Spain)

I will interpret this book with all my might, according to what my hand can comprehend, if HaShem the LORD will be with me.

And in order for my ways to be true, I have clarified three times:

At first, revealing each word's meaning.

And second, making known the context of the sentence, according to its simple reading.

And third, interpreting, in the style of the Midrash.

This is the most honored of all the books that Solomon compiled. And God forbid that these words be considered words of lust, but must be considered allegory (like the prophecy of Ezekiel to the congregation of Israel)... And if it weren't understood in accordance with its highest magnificence, spoken with the holy spirit, it wouldn't defile the hands!

### Ibn Ezra - Shir HaShirim 1:1

יִשְׁקֵנִי מִנְּשִׁיקוֹת פִּיהוּ כִּי־טוֹבִים דְּדִיךְ מִיַּיִן:

*Oh, give me of the kisses of your mouth, For your love is more delightful than wine.*

**Ibn Ezra 1:** “Yashkeni” comes from the word “Neshika,” and various spellings indicate whether kisses on the mouth, hand, or cheek

**Ibn Ezra 2:** Here we find a young woman, outside of the city, among the vineyards. She has seen a shepherd, and her heart lusts after him.

**Ibn Ezra 3:** This verse speaks of the congregation of Israel, who (starting with Abraham) kept God's commandments. We know that the keeping of God's commandments, laws, statutes and Torah brings more celebration than wine.



## Shir HaShirim 4:5, with Rashi

שְׁנֵי שְׂדֵיךְ כְּשְׁנֵי עֶפְרַיִם תְּאוֹמֵי צְבִיָּה הָרוּעִים בְּשׂוֹשַׁנִּים:

*Your breasts are like two fawns, Twins of a gazelle, Browsing among the lilies.*

שְׁנֵי שְׂדֵיךְ. הַמִּינִיקוֹת אוֹתְךָ, זֶה מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן. כְּשְׁנֵי עֶפְרַיִם תְּאוֹמֵי צְבִיָּה. דֶּרֶךְ צְבִיָּה לֵהוֹיֹת יוֹלְדֵת תְּאוֹמִים. כִּן שְׁבִיָּהֶם שְׂוִים, שְׂקוּלִים זֶה כְּזֶה. דָּבָר אַחֵר: "שְׁנֵי שְׂדֵיךְ" עַל שֵׁם הַלוֹחֹת "תְּאוֹמֵי צְבִיָּה" שֶׁהֵם מְכֻנּוֹת בְּמִדָּה אַחַת, וְחֻמְשָׁה דְבָרוֹת עַל זֶה וְחֻמְשָׁה עַל זֶה מְכֻנִּין דְּבוּר כְּנֶגֶד דְּבוּר

*Your two breasts.* Which nourished you. This refers to Moshe and Aharon.

*Like two fawns, twins of a gazelle.* It is a gazelle's nature to bear twins, similarly, they [Moshe and Aharon] are equal, this one to that one.

Another explanation, "Your bosom," is a reference to the Tablets, "twins of a gazelle," they are equal with one measure; five commandments on this one and five on the other, each commandment corresponding to the other.

### Introduction to Shir HaShirim - Rashi (11th century France)

"One thing God has spoken, two things have I heard." (Psalms 62:12) - one source is stated by God, and from it emerge several explanations. But in the end, a text does not leave behind its context and meaning (*pshuto umashmao*). So even though the prophets spoke their words as parable, it is necessary to explain the parable according to its nature and order, just as the texts are ordered one after the other.

And I have seen for this book many aggadic interpretations. There are those who explain all this book in one midrash, and then there are those explanations scattered among various midrashim, and there are even those that interpret individual texts and do not fit the language of the text and the order of the texts!

And I said in my heart that to seize the meaning of the text, and to set the explanations in order, I will make each midrash of our sages fit in its proper place.



And so I say: King Solomon foresaw (with the holy spirit) that in the future the children of Israel will be exiled, exile after exile, destruction after destruction, and will mourn in this exile over their earlier honor. They will remember the earlier love, that they were **a treasure above all other people** (Exodus 19.5). They will say: **I will go and I will return to my first husband, for it was better for me then than now** (Hosea 2.9) **And they will remember his kindness, and their betrayal that they betrayed** (Lev. 26.40), and the goodness that He promised to give in the end of days.

And this book is based, by the holy spirit, in the metaphor of **a woman bound in living widowhood** (2 Sam. 20.3), longing for her husband, leaning on her beloved, remembering the love of her youth for him and admitting her sins. Her beloved is also **suffering with her in her pain** (Isaiah 63.9), and remembers the love of her youth and the beauty of her beauty, and the rightness of her deeds, that with them he was connected with her in a powerful love, so that she might know that **he is not causing her suffering from his heart** (Eicha 3.33) **and her exile is not exile** (Isaiah 50.1), **for she is still his wife and he her husband** (Hosea 2.4) and he will return to her.



## Why Do We Read Shir HaShirim on Pesach?

Shir Ha-Shirim's message and that of the Exodus are the same: They both represent a love story in which faith born of love trumped sheer rational calculation.

The message of Hosea, Ezekiel, and Jeremiah is that the Exodus was more than a theological drama about the defeat of false gods by the true One, or a political narrative about slavery and freedom. It is a love story – troubled and tense, to be sure – yet an elopement by bride and groom to the desert where they can be alone together, far out of sight of prying eyes and the distractions of civilization.

That is the theme of the Song of Songs. Like God summoning His people out of Egypt, the lover in the song calls on his beloved, “Come... let us leave” (2:10). The beloved herself says: “Come, draw me after you, let us run!” (1:4). Then, in an image of extraordinary poignancy, we see the two of them emerging together from the wilderness: “Who is this, rising from the desert, leaning on her beloved?” ([Song. 8:5](#)).

... God chose Israel because Israel was willing to follow Him into the desert, leaving Egypt and all its glory behind for the insecurity of freedom, relying instead on the security of faith.

### **Song of Songs, 8:5**

מִי זֹאת עֹלָה מִן־הַמִּדְבָּר מֵתְרַפֶּקֶת עַל־דֹּדָה תַּחַת הַתְּפֹחַ עֹרֶרְתִּיךָ שָׁמָּה חִבַּלְתְּךָ אִמְךָ שָׁמָּה חִבְּלָה  
יִלְדְתְּךָ: שִׁימֵנִי כְּחוֹתֶם עַל־לֵבֶךָ כְּחוֹתֶם עַל־זְרוּעֶךָ כִּי־עֵזָה כְּמוֹת אֶהְבֶּה קִשָּׁה כְּשֹׂאֵל קִנְיָה רִשְׁפִּיָּה רִשְׁפִּי  
אֵשׁ שְׁלֵהֲבִתָּיהָ: מִיָּם רַבִּים לֹא יִכְלוּ לְכַבּוֹת אֶת־הָאֵהָבָה וּנְהָרוֹת לֹא יִשְׁטֹפוּהָ אִם־יִתֵּן אִישׁ אֶת־כָּל־הוֹן בֵּיתוֹ  
(בְּאֶהְבֶּה בְּזִזְיָה לִּי)

Who is she that comes up from the desert, Leaning upon her beloved? Under the apple tree I roused you; It was there your mother conceived you, There she who bore you conceived you. Let me be a seal upon your heart, Like the seal upon your hand. For love is fierce as death, Passion is mighty as Sheol; Its darts are darts of fire, A blazing flame. Vast floods cannot quench love, Nor rivers drown it.