The Song of Solomon

John Cunyus, Translator
Scripture from The Latin Vulgate

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Solomon and The Vulgate

Solomon, King of Israel
in Jerusalem,
son of David.

Reigned: 971 B.C.E. (Before the Common Era, formerly B.C.) and 931 B.C.E.\(^1\)

Tradition teaches that Solomon, king of Israel, wrote the Biblical books of “Proverbs,” “Ecclesiastes,” and “Song of Solomon.”
- He wrote “Song of Solomon” as a young man.
- “Proverbs” was the work of his middle age, as he governed his kingdom and labored to raise his family.
- “Ecclesiastes” was the work of his old age, as he reflected on his earthly life.\(^2\)

The Vulgate,
translated by St. Jerome.

Date of Translation: 382-405 C.E.\(^3\) (Common Era, formerly A.D.).

The Vulgate, or *Biblia Sacra Iuxta Vulgatam Versionem*, is a carefully-restored version of the official Bible translation, into Latin, of the Roman Catholic Church. The version I use in my translation came through BibleWorks, an excellent software tool for serious students of scripture. The German Bible Society holds the copyright to this particular version, and has graciously allowed me to use it in these translations.

Eusebius Hieronymus, known to history as Saint Jerome, was born 347 C.E., died 419/420 C.E. A “biblical translator and monastic leader, traditionally regarded as the most learned of the Latin Fathers,”\(^4\) Jerome combined a love of scripture with a vast knowledge of Classical learning. His translation grew out of his own longing for holiness and a Christian vocation. His life, mired as it was in controversy and struggle, set the stage for the preservation of scripture through the dark centuries following the collapse of Rome’s Empire in the West.

*In 382 [C.E.], Pope Damasus commissioned Jerome, the leading biblical scholar of his day, to produce an acceptable Latin version of the Bible from the various translations then being used. His revised Latin translation of the Gospels appeared about 383. Using the Septuagint Greek version of the Old Testament, he produced new Latin translations of the Psalms (the so-called Gallican Psalter), the Book of Job, and some*

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\(^3\) [http://www.bible-researcher.com/vulgate1.html](http://www.bible-researcher.com/vulgate1.html).

Rather than translating the Bible into the literary Latin of his day, he translated it into so-called Vulgar Latin, the language of ordinary people, intending that the Bible be read and understood as widely as possible. The translation draws its English name, “The Vulgate,” from this. By the 6th Century after Christ, the Vulgate had become the official translation of the Roman Catholic Church. By means of the Vulgate, scholars transmitted the biblical tradition to the West. In 1455, Johannes Gutenberg printed a version of Jerome’s work, making it “the first complete book extant in the West and the earliest printed from movable type.”

Jerome’s translation is remarkable for both its faithfulness to the originals and the simplicity of its presentation. More than a mere translation, The Vulgate is one of the world’s great works of literature and a monument of the world’s religions. I offer this translation of the combined works of Solomon and Jerome, convinced of the surpassing value of the Wisdom tradition in the Bible. May others find the same joy reading it as I have found translating it.

To see translations of the following books, please click on the links below.

**Proverbs**

**Ecclesiastes**
Including an extended Introduction.

**Song of Solomon**
Including an extended Introduction

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2 Ibid, pg. 438.

3 Ibid, pg. 438.

4 The New Encyclopaedia Britannica, Volume 5, Micropaedia, Encyclopedia Britannica, Chicago, 1998, Pg. 582
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Introduction

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A Note on Using Wikipedia
"The Song of Solomon" was written originally in Hebrew, centuries before the birth of Christ. In an age before computers or printing presses, this book, like all others, survived only by being copied manually by generations of scholars. This process took place for centuries among the Jews, the work’s first custodians, who considered the book divinely inspired.

Its first known translation took place in the 3rd Century B.C.E. (Before the Common Era), in Alexandria, Egypt. At the behest of Ptolemy II Philadelphus, Jewish scholars translated the Hebrew scriptures into Greek, the common language of the day. This translation, known as the Septuagint, became the Bible of Greek-speaking Jewish synagogues scattered throughout the Greco-Roman world. As such, it became the Bible both of the first Gentile converts to Christianity, and of the writers of the New Testament.

The Song of Solomon was translated from Hebrew into Latin by Jerome some four centuries after Christ. Jerome translated the work into the common Latin of his day, so-called “Vulgar Latin,” rather into the more refined literary Latin. This made his translation accessible to ordinary hearers of the period, allowing it pass on from Jerome’s translation into the canon of Western faith and culture. As with the Hebrew original, translations of the Song of Solomon had to be copied down by hand, until the invention of the printing press stabilized its form in the 15th Century C.E.

The title of the book derives from the Hebrew inscription above the first line of poetry: “The Song of Songs, Which is Solomon’s.” In the Septuagint as well as most English translations, the phrase appears as Song of Solomon 1:1. The inscription is not found in the text of the Vulgate, and so does not appear in the text of this translation. Jerome begins the Vulgate translation with the first line of the first poem, rather than the inscription.

The doubled phrasing of the first phrase, “Song of Songs,” reflects a Hebrew idiom which stresses that the thing in question is the supreme example of its type. Thus, the “Song of Songs” is the best of songs, even as the Holy of Holies is the most holy of all places. Whether the

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11 “Interpreter’s”, pgs. 273-278


14 See Hebrews 9:3.
inscription intends to tell us that Solomon composed the song, or merely that it was his favorite, is unclear from the language itself. Both Jewish and Christian traditions assert that Solomon wrote the poem as a young man, though many modern scholars dismiss the idea out of hand.

The book’s date of composition is also disputed. Its association with Solomon makes it unlikely that the book was written earlier than his reign, which ended in the year 931 B.C.E. Its inclusion in the Septuagint means it could not have been written later than the 3rd Century B.C.E. Given the length of time it must have taken for a work to have been accepted as canonical, one could argue logically for a date closer to the 9th than to the 3rd Centuries before Christ. The fact is that we know for sure neither the author’s name nor the date of the work’s composition.

The work is a series of passionate love poems, reflecting the courtship and marriage of a man and a woman. Because of the way the English language deals with gender, it is often difficult to follow who is speaking to whom in an English translation. Latin, like the Romance languages derived from it, handles gender differently. This makes it easier to follow the back-and-forth of the speakers.

In all, there seem to be four speakers:

- **The Man**, also referred to as the King and the Groom.
- **The Woman**, also referred to as the Wife, the Shulamite.
- **The Daughters of Jerusalem**, young women who are contemporaries of the Woman.
- **The Friends**, associates of the Man and Woman.

Scholars have debated through the centuries the meaning of the book. On an obvious level, it is about love between a woman and a man. That fact troubled later interpreters, shaped by the disdain for human sexuality that long shaped Jewish and Christian traditions. Jewish interpreters tended to see the book as an allegory for the relationship between God and Israel. For Christians, the Man came to represent Christ or God, and the Woman the Church or the individual soul.

It is not surprising that many interpreters refused to accept the literal interpretation of the book. The Song of Solomon is sexually graphic in ways that even jaded, modern readers are reluctant to discuss. It contains overt references to the woman’s breasts (4:10), as well as “the joints of [her] thighs” (7:1). It mentions the location of her mother’s first experience of intercourse (8:5). There are subtler allusions as well, which the reader will have to discover for herself. Yet the love between the characters is as chaste and monogamous as it is passionate and graphic. “All my fruits, old and new, I saved for you,” the Woman assures the Man in 7:14.

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17 Ibid., pg. 959.
Given its vivid content, why is the book in the Bible? In A. S. Herbert’s words:

*It is part of the glory of Israel’s faith that it saw human life in all its aspects as having a full and rightful place in the divine purpose. Human love and marriage are part of God’s will for man; through love’s fulfillment in marriage human nature reaches the greatest heights of earthly experience. The horrors of man’s perversion of love must be continually challenged by its true expression as God gave it to man, and as it is celebrated in [the Song of Solomon].*  

The book is one of the most striking and brilliant literary works in the Old Testament canon. Whether it describes love physically or allegorically, few readers doubt the passion and inspiration of its composition. Rabbi Akiba, whose life and work helped provide the model for rabbinical Judaism after the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in 70 C.E., said,

“... all the ages are not worth the day on which the Song of Songs was given to Israel; for all the writings are holy, but the Song of Songs is the Holy of Holies.”


The Song of Songs, Which Is Solomon

Chapter 1
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The Woman

1:1 osculetur me osculo oris sui quia meliora sunt ubera tua vino

Let him kiss me with the kiss of his mouth, because your body is better than wine.

1:2 fraglantia unguentis optimis oleum effusum nomen tuum ideo adulescentulae dilexerunt te

The passion of your scents is the best; your name is squeezed oil; therefore young women loved you.

1:3 trahe me post te curremus introxit me rex in cellaria sua exultabimus et laetabimur in te memores uberum tuorum super vinum recti diligunt te

Take me!

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22 Nova Vulgata, amores.

23 Use of italic case in the English translation indicates a word added in the translation that is not in the original. The English verb “is” often must be added to make grammatical sense of the Latin. Latin, like Hebrew and Greek before it, often phrased sentences without a verb, where a simple “to be” form is needed in English. The original Latin, translated literally, is “All vanity.” Latin, unlike Greek and Hebrew, has neither definite nor indefinite articles (a, an, the). Where these are found in the translations, they are always words that have been added to make better sense of the translation.

24 Note the ambiguity of “Let him kiss me . . . because your body . . .” She doesn’t seem to be addressing the one she is actually kissing.

25 Nova Vulgata, fragrantiam.

26 Nova Vulgata, amorem.
We will run after you!

The king brought me into his cellar.

We will exult and be happy in you, remembering your body more than wine!

_The_ upright love you!

1:4 *nigra sum sed formonsa filiae Hierusalem sicut tabernacula Cedar sicut pelles Salomonis*

I am black but beautiful!

_The_ daughters of Jerusalem are like _the_ tabernacle of Cedar, like _the_ pelts of Solomon.

1:5 *nolite me considerare quod fusca sim quia decoloravit me sol filii matris meae pugnaverunt contra me posuerunt me custodem in vineis vineam meam non custodivi*

Don’t judge me because I am darkened, because _the_ sun discolored me.

My mother’s sons fought against me and made me keeper of _a_ vineyard.

I have not tended my vine.  

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27 Nova Vulgata, *irati sunt mihi.*

28 She has been out in the sun working, rather than indoors putting on makeup.
Tell me, you who delight my soul, where do you feed your flock?

Where do you eat at midday, so I do not begin to wander after the flocks of your companions?

If you don’t know yourself, O beautiful among women, go out and pass beyond the steps of the flock, and graze your young goats beside the shepherds’ tabernacle.

I compared you to my horsemen, in Pharaoh’s chariots, my love.

Your cheeks

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29 Nova Vulgata lacks te.
30 Nova Vulgata, Equae in curribus pharaonis assimilavi te.
31 Physical prowess and grace are beautiful to him, not mere adornment.
32 Nova Vulgata, Pulchrae sunt genae tuae inter inaures, collum tuum inter monilia.
are lovely,
like turtle-doves,
your neck
like a necklace

1:10 *murenulas*<sup>33</sup> *aureas faciemus tibi vermiculatas argento*

We will make
golden bridles
for you,
studded with silver.

**The Woman**

1:11 *dum esset rex in accubitu suo nardus mea dedit odorem suum*

While the king
reclined to eat,
my scented oil
gave its odor.

1:12 *fasciculus murrae dilectus meus mihi inter ubera mea commorabitur*

My lover to me is
*like a little bundle*
of myrrh;
he will linger
between my breasts.

1:13 *botrus cypri dilectus meus mihi in vineis Engaddi*

*A cluster of grapes*
from Cyprus
*is my lover to me,*
in *the* vines
of En-geddi.

**The Man**

1:14 *ecce tu pulchra es amica mea ecce tu pulchra oculi tui columbarum*

How beautiful
you are,
my love!

How beautiful you are!

Your eyes are like doves!

**The Woman**

1:15 *ecce tu pulcher es dilecte mi et decorus lectulus noster floridus*

How handsome you are, my love!

Our bed is blossoming!

1:16 *tigna domorum nostrarum cedrina laquearia nostra cypressina*

*The* beams of our house are cedar, our rafters of cypress.

*Beginning of Chapter*
Chapter 2

The Woman
2:1 *ego flos campi et lilium convallium*

I am a flower
of the field,
and a lily
of the valley.

The Man
2:2 *sicut lilium inter spinas sic amica mea inter filias*

Like a lily
among thorns,
so is my love
among young women.

The Woman
2:3 *sicut malum\textsuperscript{14} inter ligna silvarum sic dilectus meus inter filios sub umbra illius quam desideraveram sedi et fructus eius dulcis gutturi meo*

Like an apple
among the trees
of the forest,
so is my lover
among young men.

I sat under his shadow,
whom I desired,
and his fruit
was sweet
to my throat.

2:4 *introduxit me in cellam vinariam ordinavit in me caritatem\textsuperscript{15}*

He brought me
into the wine cellar.

\textsuperscript{14} Nova Vulgata, *malus*.

\textsuperscript{15} Nova Vulgata, *et vexillum eius super me est caritas*.
He commanded love
in me.

2:5 *fulcite me floribus*\(^{36}\) *stipate me malis quia amore langueo*

Prop me up
with flowers!

Press me
with apples,
because I am sick
with love!

2:6 *leva*\(^{37}\) *eius sub capite meo et dextera illius amplexabitur*\(^{38}\) *me*

His left *hand*
is under my head
and his right
will caress me

**The Man**

2:7 *adiuro vos filiae Hierusalem per capreas cervosque camporum ne suscitetis neque evigilare faciatis dilectam quoadusque ipsa velit*

I adjure you,
daughters of Jerusalem,
by *the* roes and stags
of *the* field:
do not arouse
or work to awaken
delight
until she chooses.\(^{39}\)

**The Woman**

2:8 *vox dilecti mei ecce iste venit saliens in montibus transiliens colles*

The voice

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\(^{36}\) Nova Vulgata, *uvuraum placentis.*

\(^{37}\) Nova Vulgata, *Laeva.*

\(^{38}\) Nova Vulgata, *amplexatur.*

\(^{39}\) Nova Vulgata, *amplexatur.*

\(^{39}\) To adjure is to urge another to swear a legally binding oath. Compare this passage to 3:5, 5:8, and 8:4.
of my lover!

Look!

He comes,
leaping in *the* mountains,
crossing *the* hills!

2:9 *similis est dilectus meus capreae hinuloque*⁴⁰ *cervorum en ipse stat post parietem nostrum despiciens*⁴¹ *per fenestras prospiciens per cancellos*

My lover is
like *a* roe
or *a* young deer.

He himself stands
behind our wall,
looking through
*the* windows,
glancing through
*the* shutters,

2:10 *et dilectus meus loquitur mihi surge propera amica mea formonsa mea et veni*

and my lover
speaks to me.

**The Man**
Rise up quickly,
my love,
my beauty,
and come!

2:11 *iam enim hiemps transiit imber abiit et recessit*

For winter
is already past,
*the* storm
has passed
and ebbed away.

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⁴⁰ Nova Vulgata, *hinuloque*.

⁴¹ Nova Vulgata, *respiciens*. 
2:12 *flores apparuerunt in terra tempus putationis advenit vox turturis audita est in terra nostra*

Flowers have appeared
in *the* land.

*The* time of pruning
has come.

*The* voice
of *the* turtle-dove
is heard
in *our* land.

2:13 *ficus protulit grossos suos vineae florent*⁴² *dederunt odorem*⁴³ *surge amica mea speciosa mea et veni*

*The* fig tree
has put forth
its green figs,
vines flower,
giving their odor!

Rise up,
my love,
my spectacular *one*,
and come!

2:14 *columba mea in foraminibus petrae in caverna maceriae*⁴⁴ *ostende mihi faciem tuam sonet vox tua in auribus meis vox enim tua dulcis et facies tua decora*

My dove *is* in
*the* rooms of stone
in *the* hollows
of *the* wall.

Show me your face!

Let your voice

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⁴² Nova Vulgata, *florentes.*

⁴³ Nova Vulgata adds *suum.*

⁴⁴ Nova Vulgata, *caverna abrupta.*
sound in my ear, 
for your voice 
is sweet 
and your face 
lovely!

2:15 capite nobis vulpes vulpes parvulas quae demoliuntur vineas nam vinea nostra floruit

Capture for us 
the foxes, 
the young foxes 
who destroy our vines, 
now that our vine 
has flowered.

The Woman
2:16 dilectus meus mihi et ego illi qui pascitur inter lilia

My lover 
is mine 
and I am his, 
who feeds 
among the lilies,

2:17 donec adspiret dies et inclinentur umbrae revertere similis esto dilecte mi capreae aut hinulo cervorum super montes Bether

until the day breathes 
and the shadows incline.

Return!

My lover is like 
a roe or a young deer 
on the mountains 
of Bether.

Beginning of Chapter

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45 Nova Vulgata, florescunt.

46 Nova Vulgata, festinent.
Chapter 3

The Woman

3:1 in lectulo meo per noctes quaesivi quem diligat anima mea quaesivi illum et non inveni

In my bed at night
I sought him
whom my soul loves.

I sought him,
but I did not find him! 47

3:2 surgam et circuibo civitatem per vicos et plateas quaeram quem diligat anima mea quaesivi illum et non inveni

I rose
and walked
through the city,
down rows of houses
and streets,
seeking him
whom my soul loves.

I sought him
but I did not find him!

3:3 invenerunt me vigiles qui custodiunt 48 civitatem num quem dilexerit anima mea vidistis

The watchmen
who keep the city
found me.

Haven’t you see
one whom
my soul loves?

3:4 paululum cum pertransissem eos inveni quem diligat anima mea tenui eum nec dimittam
donec introducam illum in domum matris meae et in cubiculum genetricis meae

47 Nova Vulgata, circumeunt.

48 Nova Vulgata, circumeunt.
A little while
after passing them,
I found him
whom my soul loves.

I took him
and did not let go
until I brought him
to my mother’s house\(^49\)
and into the bed
of she who
gave birth to me.\(^50\)

The Man

3:5 *adiuro vos filiae Hierusalem per capreas cervosque camporum ne suscitetis neque evigilare faciatis dilectam donec ipsa velit*

I adjure you,
daughters of Jerusalem,
by the roes and stags
of the field:
do not arouse
or work to awaken
delight
until she chooses.\(^51\)

3:6 *quae est ista quae\(^52\) ascendit per desertum sicut virgula fumi ex aromatibus murrae et turis\(^53\) et universi pulveris pigmentarii*

Who is she
who rises up
in the desert,
like a pillar
of smoke

\(^{49}\) This time the lovemaking is in her home, rather than his.

\(^{50}\) Her mother’s house is in Jerusalem. She is not a foreigner or stranger.

\(^{51}\) This is the King’s second formal adjurement. Compare to 2:7, 5:8, and 8:4.

\(^{52}\) *Nova Vulgata*, *Quid hoc, quod ascendit*.

\(^{53}\) *Nova Vulgata*, *fumi, aromitazans tus et myrrham*. 
from aromatic myrrh, 
and incense, 
and all the powders 
of the fragrance sellers?55

**The Friends**

3:7 *en lectulum Salomonis sexaginta fortes ambiunt*55 *ex fortissimis Israhel*

Around Solomon’s bed, 
sixty strong men walk, 
from the mightiest of Israel,

3:8 *omnes tenentes gladios et ad bella doctissimi unius cusque ensis super femur suum propter timores nocturnos*

all having swords 
and highly trained 
for war,

a weapon strapped 
to each one’s leg, 
because of night’s dangers.

3:9 *ferculum fecit sibi rex Salomon de lignis Libani*

King Solomon made 
a carriage for himself 
of the wood of Lebanon.56

3:10 *columnas eius fecit argenteas reclinatorium aureum ascensum purpureum media caritate constravit propter filias Hierusalem*57

He made 
its columns of silver, 
its seat of gold, 

55 The language describes a Procession, like that at a wedding. The description of her rising up in the desert echoes Israel’s journey through the Wilderness, by which the Lord brought them into the Land of Canaan as His chosen nation. See the books of Exodus and Numbers.

56 *Nova Vulgata, ambiant illum.*

57 This describes Solomon’s royal carriage.

58 *Nova Vulgata, sedile purpureum:medium eis stratum ebeneum,Filiae Ierusalem,*
its frame of purple,  
which he spread out,  
full of love,  
on account of  
the daughters of Jerusalem.

3:11  egredimini et videte filiae Sion regem Salomonem in diademate quo coronavit eum58 mater suia in die desponsationis59 illius et in die laetitiae cordis eius

Go and see,  
daughters of Zion,  
King Solomon  
in the diadem  
with which his mother  
crowned him,  
on the day  
of his coronation  
and on the day  
of joy  
of her heart.

Beginning of Chapter

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58 Nova Vulgata, illum.
59 Nova Vulgata, desponsationis.
The Man

4:1 quam pulchra es amica mea quam pulchra es oculi tui columbarum absque eo quod intrinsecus latet capilli tui sicut greges caprarum quae ascenderunt de monte Galaad

How beautiful you are, my love!

How beautiful you are!

Your eyes are like doves, apart from that which lies hidden within!

Your hair is like a flock of goats, which climb up from Mount Gilead!

4:2 dentes tui sicut greges tonsarum quae ascenderunt de lavacro omnes gemellis fetibus et sterilis non est inter eas

Your teeth are like flocks of shorn sheep, who climb up from the washing, all with twin lambs, and none among them is sterile.

4:3 sicut vitta coccinea labia tua et eloquium tuum dulce sicut fragmen mali punici ita genae
Your lips are
like a scarlet band,
and your speech sweet!

Your cheeks
are like a piece
of pomegranate,
 apart from that
which lies hidden
within!

4:4 sicut turris David collum tuum quae aedificata est cum propugnaculis mille clypei pendent
ex ea omnis armatura fortium

Your neck
is like the tower
of David,
which is built
with bulwarks.

A thousands shields
hang from it,
each one
weapons of the mighty.

4:5 duo ubera tua sicut duo hinuli capreae gemelli qui pascuntur in liliis

Your two breasts
like two young deer,
twins who graze
among the lilies.

4:6 donec adspiret dies et inclinentur umbrae vadam ad montem murrae et ad collem turis

Let me go
to the mountain of myrrh

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64 Nova Vulgata lacks absque eo quod intrinsecus latet. Adds pervalemen tuum.

65 Nova Vulgata antequam.

66 Nova Vulgata, festinant.
and to the hill of incense
until the day breathes
and shadows incline!

4:7 tota pulchra es amica mea et macula non est in te

You are
totally beautiful,
my love!

There is
no flaw in you!

4:8 veni de Libano sponsa veni de Libano veni coronaberi°7 s de capite Amana de vertice Sanir
et Hermon de cubilibus leonum de montibus pardorum

Come from Lebanon,
my bride!

Come from Lebanon!

Come!

You will be crowned
from the top of Amana,
from the heights
of Sanir and Hermon,
from the lion’s dens,
from the leopards’ mountains!

4:9 vulnerasti cor meum soror mea sponsa vulnerasti cor meum in uno oculorum tuorum et in
uno crine colli°8 tui

You wounded my heart,
my sister, my wife!

You wounded my heart,
by one of your eyes alone,
by one lock
from your neck!

°7 Nova Vulgata, ingredere; respice.
°8 Nova Vulgata, monili torques.
4:10 quam pulchrae sunt mammae tuae soror mea sponsa pulchriora ubera tua vino et odor unguentorum tuorum super omnia aromata

How beautiful are your nipples, my sister, my wife!

Your breasts are more beautiful than wine, and the odor of your perfume surpasses all aromas!

4:11 favus distillans labia tua sponsa mel et lac sub lingua tua et odor vestimentorum tuorum sicut odor turis

Your lips are a dripping honeycomb, my wife!

Honey and milk are under your tongue, the odor of your garments like the odor of incense!

4:12 hortus conclusus soror mea sponsa hortus conclusus fons signatus

An enclosed garden, is my sister, my wife, an enclosed garden, a sealed spring!

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69 Nova Vulgata, amores.
70 Nova Vulgata, amores.
71 Nova Vulgata, Libani.
4:13 emissiones tuae paradisus malorum punicorum cum pomorum fructibus cypri cum nardo

Your emissions are a paradise of pomegranates, with the fruits of an orchard, of the henna-tree, with scented oil,

4:14 nardus et crocus fistula et cinnamomum cum universis lignis Libani murræ et aloe cum omnibus primis unguentis

scented oil and saffron flower and cinnamon, with all the woods of Lebanon, myrrh and aloes, with all the finest perfumes,

4:15 fons hortorum puteus aquarum viventium quae fluunt impetu de Libano

a garden spring, a well of living waters, which flow from the heights of Lebanon,

4:16 surge aquilo et veni auster perfla hortum meum et fluant aromata illius

Rise, North Wind, and come, South Wind!

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72 Nova Vulgata, propaginæ.
73 Nova Vulgata, optimis.
74 Nova Vulgata, turiferis.
Blow through my garden, that its aromas might flow!

Beginning of Chapter
Chapter 5

The Woman

5:1 *veniat dilectus meus in hortum suum et comedat fructum pomorum suorum*  
*veni in hortum meum soror mea sponsa messui murram meam cum aromatibus meis comedi favum cum melle meo bibi vinum meum cum lacte meo comedite amici bibite et inebriamini carissimi*

Let my love come  
into his garden  
and eat *the* fruit  
of his apple trees!

The Man

Come to my garden,  
my sister, my wife!

I have trimmed  
my myrrh,  
with all my aromatic spices,  
I have eaten honeycomb  
with my honey,  
I have drunk my wine  
with my milk!

Eat, friends!  
Drink  
and be drunk,  
my dearly loved!*76*

The Woman

5:2 *ego dormio et cor meum vigilat vox dilecti mei pulsantis aperi mihi soror mea amica mea columba mea inmaculata mea quia caput meum plenum est rore et cincinni mei guttis noctium*

I sleep  
and my heart awaits  
*the* voice of my love

*75* Nova Vulgata, *fructus eius optimus.*

*76* The groom/king invites all to the joy of the Wedding celebration.
calling.\textsuperscript{77}

**The Man**

Open to me,
my sister,
my lover,
my flawless dove!

My head
is covered with dew,
my locks
with the drops
of night!

**The Woman**

5:3 *expoliavi\textsuperscript{78} me tunica mea quomodo induar illa lavi pedes meos quomodo inquinabo illos*

I have taken off
my tunic!
How will I
put it back on?

I have washed
my feet!
How will I
dirty them again?

5:4 *dilectus meus misit manum suam per foramen et venter meus intremuit ad tactum eius\textsuperscript{79}*

My lover
put his hand
through the opening
and my womb
trembled at his touch.

5:5 *surrexi ut aperirem dilecto meo manus meae stillaverunt murra\textsuperscript{80} digiti mei pleni murra probatissima*

\textsuperscript{77} The passages marks the beginning of her second search for the Beloved. Is she dreaming? Compare with her search beginning at 3:1.

\textsuperscript{78} Nova Vulgata, *expoliavi*.

\textsuperscript{79} Nova Vulgata, *et venter meus ilico intremuit*.

\textsuperscript{80} Nova Vulgata, *myrrha, et digiti mei pleni myrrha probatissima super ansam pessuli*. 
I raised up
that I might open
to my lover!

My hands dripped
with myrrh,
my fingers
full of costliest myrrh.

5:6 *pessulum ostii aperui dilecto meo at ille declinaverat atque transierat anima mea liquefacta est ut locutus est*⁸¹ *quaesivi et non inveni illum vocavi et non respondit mihi*

I opened the latch-key
to my beloved,
but he had turned aside
and gone.

My soul melted,
*remembering* his word.

I looked,
but did not find him.

I called him,
but he didn’t
call back.

5:7 *invenerunt me custodes qui circumeunt civitatem percusserunt me vulneraverunt me tulerunt pallium meum mihi custodes murorum*

The guards who walk
around the city
found me.

They beat
and wounded me.

The keepers
of the wall
took my veil

---

⁸¹ *Nova Vulgata, quia discesserat.*
from me.\textsuperscript{82}

\textbf{5:8} \textit{adiuro vos filiae Hierusalem si inveneritis dilectum meum ut\textsuperscript{83} nuntietis ei quia amore languedo}

I adjure you, daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my lover, that you tell it, because I am sick with love!\textsuperscript{84}

\textbf{The Daughters of Jerusalem}

\textbf{5:9} \textit{qualis est dilectus tuus ex dilecto\textsuperscript{85} o pulcherrima mulierum qualis est dilectus tuus ex dilecto\textsuperscript{86} quia sic adiurasti nos}

What is your lover like, among the loved, O most beautiful of women?

What is your lover like among the loved, because you made us swear thus?

\textbf{The Woman}

\textbf{5:10} \textit{dilectus meus candidus et rubicundus electus\textsuperscript{87} ex milibus}

My lover is radiant and ruddy, chosen from a thousand.

\textsuperscript{82} Her second search is costly and painful to her.

\textsuperscript{83} Nova Vulgata, \textit{quid}.

\textsuperscript{84} This time, the woman/bride is the one adjuring. Compare to 2:7, 3:5, and 8:4. She adjures them not to avoid arousing delight prematurely, but to tell her where her Delight has gone.

\textsuperscript{85} Nova Vulgata, \textit{Quid est dilecto tuo prae ceteris}.

\textsuperscript{86} Nova Vulgata, \textit{Quid est dilecto tuo prae ceteris}.

\textsuperscript{87} Nova Vulgata, \textit{dignoscitur}.
5:11 *caput eis aurum optimum comae eis sicut elatae* \(^{88}\) palmarum nigrae quasi corvus

His head
is finest gold;
his hair
like the branches
of the palm tree,
black like a crow.

5:12 *oculi eis sicut columbae super rivulos aquarum quae lacte sunt lotae et resident iuxta fluenta plenissima*

His eyes are
like milk-washed doves
over streams of water,
who live beside
plentiful rivers.

5:13 *genae illius sicut areolae aromatum consitae a pigmentariis labia eis lilia distillantia murrum* \(^{90}\) primam

His cheeks are like
courtyards of aromatic spice,
sown by the fragrance sellers;
his lips like lilies
dripping finest myrrh.

5:14 *manus illius tornatiles aureae plenae hyacinthis venter eis* \(^{91}\) eburneus distinctus sapphyris

His hands are
like lathed gold,
full of hyacinths;
his stomach like
ivory inlaid with sapphires.

5:15 *crura illius columnae marmoreae quae fundatae sunt super bases aureas species eius ut*

---

\(^{88}\) Nova Vulgata, cincinni eis sicut racemi palmarum.

\(^{89}\) Nova Vulgata, turriculae unguentorum.

\(^{90}\) Nova Vulgata, myrrham.

\(^{91}\) Nova Vulgata adds opus after eius.
Libani electus ut cedri

His legs are like marble columns which are built on bases of gold; his appearance like Lebanon, choice like cedars.

5:16 guttur illius suavissimum et totus desiderabilis talis est dilectus meus et iste est amicus meus filiae Hierusalem

His throat is most smooth and totally desirable.

My lover is like this, and this one is my friend, daughters of Jerusalem!

The Daughters of Jerusalem
5:17 quo abiit dilectus tuus o pulcherrima mulierum quo declinavit dilectus tuus et quae remus eum tecum

Where did your lover go, O most beautiful of women?

Where did your lover turn aside to, and we will seek him with you?

Beginning of Chapter
Chapter 6

The Woman
6:1 *dilectus meus descendit in hortum suum ad areolam aromatis*⁹² ut *pascatur in hortis et lilia colligat*

My lover
came down
into his garden,
to the courtyard
of aromatic spices,
that he might dine
in the garden
and gather lilies.

6:2 *ego dilecto meo et dilectus meus mihi qui pascitur inter lilia*

I am my lover’s
and my lover is mine,
who feeds
among the lilies!

The Man
6:3 *pulchra es amica mea suavis et decora sicut Hierusalem terribilis ut castrorum acies ordinata*

My love is beautiful,
soft and elegant
like Jerusalem,
overwhelming like
the battle line of an army.

6:4 *averte oculos tuos a me quia ipsi me avolare fecerunt*⁹⁴ capilli tui sicut grex caprarum quae apparuerunt⁹⁵ de Galaad

---

⁹² Nova Vulgata, *aromatum*.
⁹³ Nova Vulgata adds *sicut Thersa*.
⁹⁴ Nova Vulgata substitutes *turbarant* for *avolare fecerunt*.
⁹⁵ Nova Vulgata, *descenderunt*.
Turn your eyes away from me, because they made me run away!

Your hair is like a herd of deer, which appeared from Gilead.

6:5 *dentes tui sicut grex ovium quae ascenderunt de lavacro omnes gemellis fetibus et sterilis non est in eis*

Your teeth *are* like a herd of sheep, who climb up from the washing, all with twin kids, and no sterile one is among them.

6:6 *sicut cortex⁹⁶ mali punici genae tuae absque occultis tuis⁹⁷*

Like the skin of a pomegranate *are* her cheeks, apart from your hidden charms.

6:7 *sexaginta sunt reginae et octoginta concubinae et adulescentularum non est numerus*

There are sixty queens and eighty concubines and numberless young women,

6:8 *una est columba mea perfecta mea una est matri⁹⁸ suae electa genetrici suae viderunt illam⁹⁹ filiae et beatissimam praedicaverunt reginae et concubinae et laudaverunt eam*

---

⁹⁶ Nova Vulgata, *fragment.*

⁹⁷ Nova Vulgata lacks *absque occultis tuis.* Adds *per velamen tuum.*

⁹⁸ Nova Vulgata, *matri.*

⁹⁹ Nova Vulgata, *eam.*
yet my dove
my perfect one
is unique among them,
only child
of her mother
chosen of the one
who bore her.

The daughters saw her
and proclaimed her
most blessed.

Even queens
and concubines
praised her!

6:9 *quae est ista quae progreditur quasi aurora consurgens pulchra ut luna electa ut sol terribilis ut acies ordinata*

Who is she who comes
like the dawn arising,
beautiful like the moon,
chosen like the sun,
fierce like the battle line of an army?100

6:10 *descendi ad hortum nucum ut viderem poma convallis101 ut inspicerem si floruisset vinea et germinassent mala punica*

I came down
to my nut garden,
to see the apples
of the valley,
to find out
if the vine flourished
and the pomegranate budded.

6:11 *nescivi anima mea conturbavit me propter quadrigas Aminadab102*

---

100 Again the language describes a Processional. Compare to 3:6.

101 Nova Vulgata, convallium.

102 Nova Vulgata, Non advertit animus meus,cum posuit me in quadrigas principis populi mei.
I did not know.

My soul troubled me, because of the chariots of Aminadab.103 104

The Friends
6:12 revertere revertere Sulamitis revertere revertere105 ut intueamur te

Come back, come back, daughter of the Shulamites!

Come back, come back, that we may admire you!

Beginning of Chapter

103 Passage is unclear. Compare to RSV: “Before I was aware, my fancy set me in a chariot beside my prince.” Aminadab was one of Solomon’s ancestors. See Matthew 1:4.

104 Now it is the man who is troubled by the woman’s absence.

105 Nova Vulgata, Convertere, convertere, Sula mitis: convertere, convertere.
The Man
7:1 *quid videbis* in Sulamiten nisi choros castrorum quam pulchri sunt gressus tui in calciamentis filia principis iunctura* feminum tuorum sicut monilia quae fabricata sunt manu artificis*

Why would you
stare at the Shulamite,
if not like a dance
of armies?

How beautiful
are your steps,
daughter of a prince!

*The* joints of your thighs
are like a necklace,
which was made
by the hands
of an artisan!

7:2 *umbilicus tuus crater tornatilis numquam indigens poculis* venter tuus sicut acervus tritici vallatus liliis

Your navel is like
a beautifully-crafted bowl,
never lacking cups!

Your stomach is like
a pile of wheat,
surrounded by lilies!

7:3 *duo ubera tua sicut duo hinuli gemelli caprae*

---

106 *Nova Vulgata*, aspicitis.

107 *Nova Vulgata*, . . . cum saltat inter binos choros? *Quam pulchri sunt pedes tui in calceamentis, filia principis! Flexurae . . .

108 The passage refers to the spectacle of ancient armies marching out to face each other in battle.

109 *Nova Vulgata*, Gremium tuum crater tornatilis: numquam indigeat vino mixto;
Your two breasts are like two fawns, twins of a deer.

7:4 collum tuum sicut turris eburnea oculi tui sicut piscinae in Esebon youae sunt in porta filiae multitudinis nasus tuus sicut turris Libani quae respicit contra Damascum

Your neck is like a dove of ivory!

Your eyes are like pools in Heshbon, which are in the gate of the daughter of a multitude.

Your nose is like the towers of Lebanon, which watch toward Damascus!

7:5 caput tuum ut Carmelus et comae capitis tui sicut purpura regis vincita canalibus

Your head is like Carmel, and the hair of your head like the purple cloth of kings, bound in channels.

7:6 quam pulchra es et quam decora carissima in deliciis

110 Nova Vulgata, Hesebon.

111 Nova Vulgata, ad portam Bathrabbim.

112 The city of Heshbon, on the far side of the Jordan River from Jerusalem, played an important part in Israel’s history. It is first mentioned in scripture in Numbers 21:25.

113 He compares his lover to the great fortifications that protected the kingdom from its enemies.

114 Nova Vulgata, ... sicut purpura; rex vincitur cincinnis.
How beautiful you are, and how lovely is my most beloved in delights!

7:7 *statura tua adsimilata est palmae et ubera tua botris*

Your height is like palm trees, and your breasts like grape clusters.

7:8 *dixi ascendam in palmam adprehendam fructus eius et erunt ubera tua sicut botri vineae et odor oris tui sicut malorum*

I said, I will climb up into my palm tree!

I will pick its fruit, and your breasts will be like clusters of grapes from the vine, and the fragrance of your mouth like apples!

**The Woman**

7:9 *guttur tuum sicut vinum optimum dignum dilecto meo ad potandum labiisque et dentibus illius ruminandum*

Your throat is like the finest wine, worthy for my lover to drink, and for his lips and teeth to taste!

7:10 *ego dilecto meo et ad me conversio eius*
I go to my lover,
and his turning
is to me!

7:11 veni dilecte mi egrediamur in agrum commoremur in villis

Come, my love!

Let us go
into the field!

Let us stay
in the villages!

7:12 mane surgamus ad vineas videamus si floruit vinea si flores fructus parturiunt si floruerunt mala punica ibi dabo tibi ubera mea

Let us rise up early
and go to the vineyards!

Let us see
if the vine blossoms,
if the flowers
give forth fruit,
if the pomegranate blooms!

There, I will give
my breasts to you!

7:14 mandragorae dederunt odorem in portis nostris omnia poma nova et vetera dilecte mi servavi tibi

The mandrakes
gave their scent

116 Nova Vulgata, properabimus.
117 Nova Vulgata, videbimus.
118 Nova Vulgata, aperiuntur.
119 Nova Vulgata, amores.
120 Nova Vulgata adds optima.
in our doorways!

All *my* fruits,
old and new,
I saved for you!\textsuperscript{121}

\begin{flushright}
Beginning of Chapter
\end{flushright}

\textsuperscript{121} Her love is chaste, reserved for him alone.
Chapter 8

The Woman

8:1 quis mihi det te fratrem meum sugentem ubera matris meae ut inveniam te foris et deosculer et iam me nemo despiciat

Who will give you to me as my brother, sucking the breasts of my mother, so that if I find you outside and kiss you, and now no one will despise me?

8:2 adprehendam te et ducam in domum matris meae ibi me docebis et dabo tibi polum ex vino condito et mustum malorum granatorum meorum

I will take you and lead you to my mother’s house!

There you will teach me and I will give you a cup of aged wine, and new wine from my pomegranates.

8:3 leva eius sub capite meo et dextera illius amplexabitur me

His left hand will be under my head

---

122 Nova Vulgata, apprehenderem.
123 Nova Vulgata, doceres.
124 Nova Vulgata, darem.
125 Nova Vulgata, Laeva.
126 Nova Vulgata, amplexatur.
and his right
will caress me

The Man
8:4 adiuro vos filiae Hierusalem ne suscitetis et evigilare faciatis dilectam donec ipsa velit

I adjure you,
daughters of Jerusalem,
do not arouse
or work to awaken
delight
until she chooses.128

8:5 quae est ista quae ascendit de deserto deliciis affluens et nixa super dilectum suum sub arbore malo suscitavi te ibi corrupta est mater tua ibi violata est genetrix tua129

Who is she
who comes up
from the desert,
flowing with delights
and leaning on her lover?130

Under an apple tree
I aroused you.

There your mother
was corrupted;
there she who bore you
was entered sexually.

8:6 pone me ut signaculum super cor tuum ut signaculum super brachium tuum quia fortis est ut mors dilectio dura sicut inferus aemulatio lampades eius lampades ignis atque flammarum131

127 Nova Vulgata, neque.

128 This is the third time he adjures them. Three repetitions emphasize the supreme importance of what he asks of them. Compare to 2:7 and 3:5.

129 Nova Vulgata, Quae est ista, quae ascendit de desertio,nixa super dilectum suum? Sub arbore malo suscitavi te;ibi parturivit te mater tua,ibi parturivit te genetrix tua.

130 For the third time, he uses the language of Processional to describe her coming. This time she comes up as a married woman,
leaning on her lover.

131 Nova Vulgata, flammae divinae.
Place me
as a seal
over your heart,
and a seal
over your arm,
because delight
is as strong as death,
ever as hard
as destruction.

Its lamps are
lamps of flame
and even fire.

8:7 aquae multae non poterunt extinguere\textsuperscript{132} caritatem nec flumina obruent illam si dederit homo omnem substantiam domus suae pro dilectione quasi nihil despicient eum

Many waters
cannot extinguish love,
nor can rivers
overwhelm it.

If a man\textsuperscript{133} were to give
all the substance
of his house for delight,
they will despise it
as nothing.

The Friends
8:8 soror nostra parva et ubera non habet quid faciemus sorori nostrae in die quando adloquenda est

Our sister is little
and has no breasts.

What shall we do
for our sister
on the day when

\textsuperscript{132} Nova Vulgata, extinguere.

\textsuperscript{133} The English word “man” translates the Latin homo. Many scholars prefer “humanity,” to clarify that the word refers to humanity as a whole, not simply to the masculine gender. This is, however, a mistranslation of the number of the original noun. We must take care in introducing an intentional mistranslation into an ancient work, for reasons having to do with contemporary issues. “Man” may be anachronistic in our culture, yet it more closely reflects the Latin homo than the plural, generic, English noun, “humanity.”
she is spoken for?

8:9 *si murus est aedificemus super eum propugnacula argentea si ostium est conpingamus illud tabulis cedrinis*

If she is *a wall*,
let us build
*a bulwark of silver*
over her.

If she is *a doorway*
let us join it
with *cedar boards*.

**The Woman**

8:10 *ego murus et ubera mea sicut turris ex quo facta sum coram eo quasi pacem repperiens*¹³⁴

*I am *a wall*
and my breasts
like *a tower,*
from which fact
*I am before him*
like one finding peace.

**The Friends**

8:11 *vinea fuit Pacifico in ea quae habet populos tradidit eam custodibus vir adfert pro fructu eius mille argenteos*

*The Peaceful One*  
had *a vineyard*  
in *that land*  
which has people.

He handed it over  
to the keepers.

*A man brings*  
*a thousand pieces of silver*

¹³⁴ *Nova Vulgata, reperiens.*

¹³⁵ *Nova Vulgata, Salomoni en Baalhamon.*  *Lacks in ea quae habet populos.*

¹³⁶ *Nova Vulgata, adfert.*
for its fruit.

The Man
8:12 *vinea mea coram me est mille tui Pacifice*\(^{137}\) *et ducenti his qui custodiunt fructus eius*

My vineyard is before me.  
* A thousand to you,  
* Peaceful One,  
* and two hundred  
* to those who  
* keep its fruit.

8:13 *quae habitas in hortis amici auscultant fac me audire vocem tuam*

You who live  
in *the* garden,  
* friends are listening!*

Make me hear  
your voice!

The Woman
8:14 *fuge dilecte mi et adsimilare\(^{138}\) capreae hinuloque cervorum super montes aromatum*

Flee, my lover,  
and be like  
*the* roe and *the* young deer  
*over the* mountains  
*of spices.*

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\(^{137}\) Nova Vulgata reads *mille tibi, Salomon.*

\(^{138}\) Nova Vulgata, *assimilare.*
A Note on Using Wikipedia

Some reviewers have raised a skeptical eyebrow at my references to Wikipedia, the online, cooperative encyclopedia. Certainly, there are better, more rigorous sources of information today. Yet, in my opinion, the advantages of using Wikipedia outweigh the disadvantages, at least when it comes to introductory references.

A July 2, 2008 story on CTV.ca, the online arm of Canadian National Television, explains the utility. Jon Beasley-Murray, Professor of Latin American Studies at the University of British Columbia, gave students in his class an assignment of writing well-researched Wikipedia articles on topics relevant to his course.

According to the story, “Beasley-Murray still plans to tell students not to cite Wikipedia in work they hand in, but he says the site can provide valuable starting points if articles are properly cited.”

Monica Freudenreich, one of Beasley-Murray’s students, summed up how she came to see Wikipedia in the process: “Maybe you don’t quote right off Wikipedia, but it’s a great . . . list of academic sources that you can go and see. It cuts down the search process,” she says.

Wikipedia is a handy springboard to more in-depth research. It is becoming increasingly a primary source for millions of internet users, who value its convenience and breadth. While it is far from perfect, it is improving steadily. These factors alone argue for its use, not to document specific information but as a starting point for further study. This is the sense in which I have cited it in my footnotes.

I value Wikipedia also for the democratization of knowledge it represents. As a living, self-correcting, collective, public-spirited effort to concentrate knowledge in accessible ways, it represents the best instincts of human scholarship. The same spirit that birthed libraries, schools, and all the public institutions of learning, has birthed Wikipedia also.

My advice to readers is, use Wikipedia, work to make it better, and pass on this invaluable resource to others.

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139 See http://www.ctv.ca/servlet/ArticleNews/story/CTVNews/20080702/wikipedia_ube_080702/20080702.