CHAPTER EIGHT

NEW SONGS OF THE BELOVED MAN

(Song 6:4–7:11)

CONTEMPLATION

I

Man 4“You are fair as Tirzah, my friend, lovely as Jerusalem, terrible as a host drawn up for battle. 2

5Turn your eyes away from me, for they devastate me! 3
Your hair like flocks of goats gambolling down from the mountains of Gilead.
6Your teeth like flocks of mother ewes which come out again from their bath: all of them have borne twins, none has lost her young.
7Like the split in the pomegranate, your cheek, behind your veil.

1 The Hebrew term tîršā can be the proper name of a city (and of a person), or an adjective, deriving from rāšāh (‘to be lovable’). The versions understand unanimously in this second sense (LXX, eudokia; the Syriac ṣbyn; Vg suavis), but the parallel with ‘Jerusalem’ speaks for the first.
2 MT’s kannidgalôt is a participle, in the niphʿal form, of dāgal and means ‘‘bannered’ (hosts)” (cf. Song 5:10). LXX has tetagmenai (‘[hosts] drawn up’); Vg castrorum acies ordinata; Symmachus, ḥōs tagmata parembolôn, ‘like the battalions of armies drawn up’. The Syriac translates gbyṭ ‘(like an elect [host?]’).
3 LXX’s anepetōsan me; Vg’s me avolare fecerunt; the Syriac’s ḫrdny (‘they have made me flee’) probably refer to the ‘going away’ of the beloved in 5:6.
Sixty are the queens,  
eighty the concubines,  
and maidens without number;  
unique is my dove, my perfect one,  
the only one of her mother,  
the darling of the one who conceived her.  
The daughters saw her and called her blessed,  
the queens and concubines, and praised her”.

II

Chorus

“Who is this, who looks down like the dawn,  
fair as the moon, bright as the sun,  
terrible as a host drawn up for battle?”

III

Man

“I went down to the nut garden,  
to look at the buds by the stream,  
to see if the vine had budded,  
if the pomegranates had flowered.  
Without my knowing it, my desire  
had carried me on to the chariots of my noble people”.

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4 MT has a masculine plural, hemmā, explicable here as poetic licence.
5 With MT and Vetus Latina. Vg translates *ad sensum: quae progreditur quasi aurora consurgens.*
6 With the versions: MT has ‘the white’, hall‘bānā.
7 MT’s bārā has the two meanings of ‘chosen/elect’ (as in v. 9c), and ‘pure, bright’. LXX’s *eklektē,* and Vg’s *electa,* follow the first meaning; the Syriac’s *dky,* the second (so too Symmachus, *kathara*).
8 With the versions. MT has hahammā, ‘the scorching’.
9 LXX adds: *ekēi dōsō tous mastous mou soi,* ‘there I will give you my breasts’ (cf. 7:13e); so too Vetus Latina.
10 With MT and the Syriac. LXX’s *ameinadab* reads as a proper name; so too Vetus Latina’s and Vg’s *Aminadab.*