

SONG OF SONGS 6:4-10

⁴You are beautiful as Tirzah, my love, comely as Jerusalem, awe-inspiring as the starry hosts!

⁵Turn away your eyes from me, for they overwhelm me! Your hair is like a flock of goats, moving down the slopes of Gilead. ⁶Your teeth, like a flock of ewes coming up from the washing; all of them in pair, none missing. ⁷Your cheeks are like halves of a pomegranate behind your veil.

⁸There are sixty queens and eighty concubines, and maidens without number. ⁹My dove, my perfect one, is the only one, the darling of her mother, flawless to her that bore her. The maidens saw her and called her happy; the queens and concubines also, and they praised her.

¹⁰“Who is this that looks forth like the dawn, fair as the moon, bright as the sun, awe-inspiring as the starry hosts?”

The Lover speaks (6:4-9)

He speaks to her of her beauty. Tirzah (the word means 'beautiful') was the capital city of the northern kingdom (Israel) from the time of Jeroboam to that of Omri (c. 930-880BC). Jerusalem was the capital of the southern kingdom (Judah).

Jerusalem's beauty is celebrated by the psalmist:

Great is YHWH and greatly to be praised in the city of our God. His holy mountain, beautiful in elevation, is the joy of all the earth: Mount Zion, pinnacle of Zaphon, the city of the great King.

– Psalm 48:1-2

The woman he loves inspires awe, like the starry hosts of the heavens.

Verses 5 to 7 echo his earlier words of praise (4:1-3). Here the effect of her eyes on him is even more awe-inspiring.

So far he has been addressing her. In verses 8-9 he boasts of her. There are echoes here of the poem that compared the marriage bed to Solomon's litter (3:6-11). No one in the royal harem can compare to the woman he loves. In her own family she is her mother's favourite.

The chorus exclaims (6:10)

Her beauty is as the beauty of the heavens.

We recall the description in the Book of Revelation of the Church assembled at the Eucharistic Banquet:

Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, “Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready; to her it has been granted to be clothed with fine linen, bright and pure” — for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

– Revelation 19:6-8