

Solomon's Use of Metaphors to Describe Imagined Intimate Relations with the Shulammitte, SOS 4:13-15; His Fascination with Pomegranates

31. Solomon continues with his metaphor by describing some of the choice products of a natural garden:

SOS 4:13 - NASB [Pick-Up Line #21] "Your shoots are an orchard of pomegranates with choice fruits, henna with nard plants."

1. The word "shoots" is **שֶׁלַח** *shelach* and refers to plants. Solomon expands on the metaphor he developed in verse 12 which characterized the Shulammitte's womb as a "locked garden." "Plants" refer to the things that are cultivated in a garden: flowers, vegetables, fruits, herbs, vines, and trees.
2. In his metaphor, Solomon imagines the pleasures he could acquire by entering the Shulammitte's "garden" and harvesting its delights.
3. These plants flourish in a beautiful setting which Solomon now describes as an "orchard." The Hebrew word is **פָּרְדֵּי** *pardes* which refers to a park. But not just any park; this is a park developed exclusively for the enjoyment of kings and is the root word for the English word "paradise."
4. The background of the word *pardes* gives us insight into its use by Solomon as a metaphor for the Shulammitte's body:

NET Bible. (Dallas: Biblical Studies Press, 2001), 1209:

²**Study note** [Song 4:13]. The noun **פָּרְדֵּי** ("garden, parkland, forest") is a foreign loanword that occurs only 3 times in the Hebrew Bible (Song 4:13; Ecclesiastes 2:5; Nehemiah 2:8).

The original Old Persian term *pairīdāeza* designated the enclosed parks and pleasure-grounds which were the exclusive domain of the Persian kings and nobility in the Achaemenid la-kē-ma-nad period [Greek *Achaimenides*: a member of the ruling house of ancient Persia generally considered historically important from the assumption of power by Cyrus the Great (559 B.C.) to the overthrow of Darius III (330 B.C.) {*Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed.}].

The Babylonia term *pardesu* means "marvelous garden," in reference to the enclosed parks of the kings. The term passed into Greek as *παράδεισος* [*paradeisos*] ("enclosed park, pleasure-ground"), referring to the enclosed parks and gardens of the Persian kings (Liddell-Scott 1308). The Greek term was transliterated into English as "paradise" [See 2 Corinthians 12:4; Revelation 2:7].

Liddell, Henry George & Robert Scott. A Greek-English Lexicon. Revised by Henry Stuart Jones. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 1308:

παράδεισος [*paradeisos*]. Enclosed park or pleasure ground. First used by Xenophon [431-352], always in reference to the parks of the Persian kings and nobles. A garden or an orchard.

Archaeological Study Bible. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 1041:

4:12 "Garden" refers to a place of sensual delights and is an apt metaphor for the beloved's body. Being "locked up," "closed," and "sealed" are metaphors for the beloved's virginity—or ... the fact that she has kept herself exclusively for her husband. Springs and fountains are sources of refreshment, metaphors for the beloved as a sexual partner.

4:13 "Your plants" is a reference to all of the beloved's features that *delight* the lover. "Orchard" comes from the Hebrew *pardes* (the root of the English "paradise"), a loanword from the Old Persian language meaning "enclosure" or "park."

5. These notes document that Solomon is using metaphorical language in this pick-up line which he is hopeful will excite passions and desires in the Shulammitte.

6. He is fixated on her sexual assets which he refers to as *pardes*, the Hebrew word for “pleasure-grounds,” or “marvelous garden,” which is the “exclusive domain of kings” which at the moment is “sealed.”
7. This is a case of Solomon committing mental adultery and telling about it. He envisions her plush garden as a place of great productivity which he intends to cultivate to satisfy his own increasingly excited passions and desires.
8. Solomon compares the sensual pleasure he expects to enjoy with examples of fruits, spices, and oils which he enjoys.
9. He was apparently very fond of pomegranates since he mentions them often. It was one of the most popular fruits in Israel. It has a bitter-sweet fruit that was used for sweetener and made into wine.

Tenney, Merrill C. (gen. ed.) *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), 816-17:

POMEGRANATE (רִמּוֹן *rimmon*). The juice from the fruits makes a syrup called grenadine. The fruits are used for making sherbets and wines, as well as being eaten fresh.

The circular calyx at the end of the fruits looks like a little crown, and a tradition claims that Solomon used it as a model for the one he wore.

10. Again we find Solomon colorfully describing from nature the vivid effect he expects from sexual experiences with the Shulammite: they would be sweet and intoxicating.
11. Next he speaks of her “choice fruits.” The word “choice” is the Hebrew מְגֵת *megeth*; it indicates a “choice thing” or the “best thing,” and is used figuratively by Solomon to describe her fruits which he imagines will provide exotic pleasure derived from exploring them in her “garden.”
12. Henna is a shrub whose blossoms are very aromatic and were known as the “bride’s flower.” This is another promo for marriage. The henna blossoms are said to be “with nard” also translated as “spikenard” in some passages.
13. Nard (נֶרְדִּי *nerd*) is an oil taken from a North Indian herb and was used in making perfume which we learned from Song 1:12 is being worn by the Shulammite.

SOS 4:13 - [KS: Pick-Up Line #21 (Paraphrase)] “Your physical pleasures are as a royal paradise full of pomegranates and choice fruits, the aromas of the henna’s bride’s flower, and the nard’s perfume,

SOS 4:14 - [KS: Pick-Up Line # 22] “nard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, with all the trees of frankincense, myrrh and aloes, along with all the finest spices.”

1. It must be remembered that Song of Solomon is a piece of music, and we are approaching it as if it were an opera. As Solomon continues his description of sexual pleasures he tries to mention every sweet-tasting, sweet-smelling item he can possibly think of.
2. This all seems superfluous but as the lyric of an aria it combines with the music to become a well-crafted piece of propaganda intended to compliment the Shulammite’s physical attributes while concealing the king’s hidden agenda: to enjoy her “paradise” physically rather than just sing about it.
3. There is nothing in particular about any of these fruits and herbs that contribute anything further to our understanding of the passage. They are simply items that were in common use of that day. They have pleasant aromas that were often used to perfume the area chosen for love making.



4. Rather than exegete this verse we'll just mention what each of these items are:

SOS 4:14 - [KS: Pick-Up Line # 22] “nard [perfume] and saffron [dried flower pistils & stigmas used as an aromatic], calamus [a sweet smelling reed] and cinnamon [a spice used as a perfume for beds], with all the trees of frankincense, myrrh and aloes [also used to perfume beds], along with all the finest spices.”

5. Many of the things Solomon sings in his pick-up lines have double meanings. They are designed to appeal to the Shulammitte's approbation lust while at the same time stimulate her passions and desires. He has one more line left to fire in this aria.

SOS 4:15 - [KS: Pick-Up Line # 23] “You are a garden spring, a well of fresh water, and streams flowing from Lebanon.”

1. In verse 12, Solomon sings about the Shulammitte being a “spring of life sealed up.” The same word is used here in the phrase, “garden spring.”
2. Solomon then describes her as a “well of fresh water” and “streams flowing from Lebanon.”
3. Each of these speaks of life and life-giving power. This water flows from the spring and it collects in a well. These waters illustrate the Shulammitte's ability to procreate.
4. Solomon knows this and has so described her in verse 12, “whose womb is a locked garden, its spring of life sealed up within.” His intent is to unlock the garden and enjoy its waters as a means of refreshment by assuaging his libido.
5. He refers to the waters as flowing from Lebanon. This is a reference to the power of the rivers whose headwaters originate in the mountains of Lebanon.
6. In the spring when the snow melts the Beqa Valley roars with the sound of the waters rushing into the rivers below. The Orontes \au-rän'-tēz\ River flows out of the Anti-Lebanon Mountains to the north of the valley and into Syria.
7. The Litani \li-tä'-nē\ River collects the run off of both mountain ranges for much of the Beqa Valley and the power of this water is a magnificent display of hydrodynamics.
8. Solomon's implication is that the compatibility between him and the Shulammitte is so harmonious that their sexual experience will be an explosion of unrestrained passions and desires being fulfilled to the maximum.
9. The phrase, “streams flowing from Lebanon” is metaphorical for the woman's physiological response to the man's physical aggression.

SOS 4:15 - [KS: Pick-Up Line #23] “You are a garden spring, a well of fresh water, whose power is like the streams flowing from the Lebanon Mountains.”

SOS 4:15 - [KS: Pick-Up Line #23, Paraphrase] “Your womb is a spring of life, a place of sexual refreshment, whose powerful response is like that of streams flowing from the Lebanon Mountains.”

10. I think we can safely say that at this point Solomon's aria reaches its climax. He has exhausted his arsenal of pick-up lines for the moment and it gives the Shulammitte a chance to get in a word edgewise.
11. Solomon fancies himself a ladies' man but he is certainly not a gentleman. The Shulammitte has the doctrine to discern the hidden agenda behind the compliments and remains a lady.

