

Song of Solomon 1:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

I have compared thee, O my love, to a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots.

Analysis

The bridegroom declares, **I have compared thee, O my love, to a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots.** The Hebrew 'lesusati berichvey par'oh' (לְסַעַת פַּרְעֹה) literally means 'to my mare among Pharaoh's chariots.' This unusual comparison requires cultural context: Egyptian pharaohs used stallions for their war chariots. A mare released among stallion-drawn chariots would create chaos—the stallions would be irresistibly drawn to her, disrupting military formation. The beloved says the bride has this captivating, overwhelming effect on him—her beauty and presence completely capture his attention and affections.

The comparison also celebrates strength, nobility, and value. Egyptian horses were prized possessions—powerful, beautiful, carefully bred. The beloved sees his bride as precious, strong, and uniquely beautiful. This verse teaches that godly love involves powerful attraction, that the beloved should captivate the lover's attention completely, and that strength and beauty together characterize the ideal. Church fathers saw Christ completely 'captured' by His Church—His love for her is overwhelming and total, drawing all His affectionate attention.

Historical Context

Egypt was renowned for horses and chariots—Israel's agricultural economy couldn't support extensive chariotry, making Egyptian military might impressive and exotic. Solomon imported horses from Egypt (1 Kings 10:28-29), making this comparison culturally relevant. The mare-among-stallions interpretation explains

what otherwise seems an odd comparison—ancient readers familiar with horse breeding and warfare would understand the disruptive, captivating power referenced. Early church interpretation emphasized Christ's overwhelming love for His Church—she completely captures His affections. The Puritans taught that marital love should involve powerful, exclusive attraction—spouses should be mutually captivated by each other. Modern readers recognize both the celebration of physical attraction within marriage and the spiritual reality that Christ is 'captivated' by His beloved Church, finding her irresistibly beautiful despite her imperfections (covered by His righteousness).

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 – God is love

Study Questions

1. How does understanding that you completely 'captivate' Christ's attention and affections transform your sense of worth and His love for you?
2. In marriage, how can spouses cultivate the kind of exclusive, powerful attraction the bridegroom describes—remaining captivated by each other throughout life?

Interlinear Text

רְשִׁיתִי בְּרַכְבָּי פָּרָעַ הַדְּמִיתִ יְהֹוָה לְסִסְתִּי
thee O my love I have compared in Pharaoh's chariots to a company of horses H5484 H7393 H6547 H1819 H7474

Additional Cross-References

Song of Solomon 2:13: The fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.

Song of Solomon 2:10: My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.

Isaiah 31:1: Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help; and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because they are many; and in horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the LORD!

Song of Solomon 2:2: As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters.

Song of Solomon 5:2: I sleep, but my heart waketh: it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night.

Song of Solomon 1:15: Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thou hast doves' eyes.

Song of Solomon 4:7: Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee.

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