

Song of Solomon 2:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether.

Analysis

Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether. The bride appeals for her beloved's presence until morning comes. The Hebrew *ad sheyafuach hayom venasu hatselalim sov demeh-lekha dodi litsebi o le-ofer ha-ayalim al-harei bater* (עד שִׁפּוּחַ הַיּוֹם וְנָסוּ הַצִּלְלִים סֹב דִּמְה־לְּךָ דּוּדִי לִצְבִי אוֹ לְעֹפֶר הָאֵילִים עַל־הָרֵי בֶּתֶר) blends longing, urgency, and sensual imagery.

"Until the day break" (*ad sheyafuach hayom*) literally means "until the day breathes" or "blows"—the morning breeze that dispels night. "The shadows flee away" (*venasu hatselalim*) describes darkness retreating before dawn. Night represents separation, shadows symbolize obstacles. The bride desires her beloved's presence throughout the night until dawn reunites them fully. This temporal imagery gains eschatological significance: believers await Christ's return when "the shadows flee away" and we see "face to face" (1 Corinthians 13:12).

"Turn, my beloved" (*sov dodi*) invites responsive movement—come to me, turn toward me. The comparison to "roe or young hart" (*litsebi o le-ofer ha-ayalim*) emphasizes grace, strength, swiftness, and vigor. The gazelle (*tsebi*) and young stag (*ofer ayalim*) were proverbially swift and sure-footed on mountains (2 Samuel 2:18, Proverbs 6:5). "Mountains of Bether" (*harei bater*) likely means "mountains of separation" or "rugged mountains"—geography emphasizing distance overcome.

by love. Christ leaps over every barrier (2:8) to reach His beloved, demonstrating His pursuing grace (Luke 19:10).

Historical Context

This verse concludes a section where the bride searches for her beloved (2:8-17). Ancient Near Eastern love poetry commonly employed night/day, darkness/light symbolism to represent separation/union. The gazelle and deer were native to ancient Israel's hill country, familiar sights conveying beauty and agility. Mountains represented both obstacle and opportunity—barriers requiring effort but offering vantage points. The bride's appeal reflects cultural norms where women's mobility was restricted, especially at night, so she invites her beloved to come to her. This section anticipates themes developed in chapter 3 where she actively searches the city for him.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does "until the day break and the shadows flee away" point toward Christ's return when all separation and darkness end?
2. What spiritual barriers or "mountains of separation" does Christ overcome to pursue and secure His bride, the church?
3. How should longing for Christ's presence and return shape daily Christian life and affections?

Interlinear Text

עַד H5704	שִׁפּוֹץ יוֹחַ break H6315	הַיּוֹם Until the day H3117	וְנָסוּ flee away H5127	וְהַצִּלּוֹת יֵם and the shadows H6752	סֹב turn H5437		
וְדָמָה and be thou like H1819	לְבִי H0	דּוֹדִי י my beloved H1730	לִצְבִּי י a roe H6643	אִוּ H176	לְעֹפָר or a young H6082	הָאֵל יֵם hart H354	עַל H5921
הָרִי upon the mountains H2022	בְּתֵר: of Bether H1336						

Additional Cross-References

Song of Solomon 4:6: Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, I will get me to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense.
