

Rapture: The Gathering of Lilies

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IN SONG OF SOLOMON, the Shulammitte–Gentile maid is compared to a lily, a beautiful and fragrant white flower that is native to Israel:

“I am the ... lily of the valleys. Like a lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters” (Song 2:1, 2).

A few verses later, the Shulammitte is called upon by her “beloved,” a shepherd, “to rise up and come away,” an allegorical picture of the Rapture:

“The voice of my beloved!
Behold, he comes
Leaping upon the mountains,
Skipping upon the hills.
My beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag.
Behold, he stands behind our wall;
He is looking through the windows,
Gazing through the lattice.
My beloved spoke, and said to me:
“Rise up, my love, my fair one,
And come away (Song 2:8–10).

Seeing that the lily is a symbol of the Bride, or Church, who is raptured into the presence of her beloved, it is fascinating to consider the full symbolism around this flower:

- The phrase “lily among the thorns” in Song 2 expresses how the Bride resides among the wicked and ungodly in the world (Matt. 13:24–30).
- The phrase “lily of the valley” describes the place where the Church grows, in low places, where plants are in danger of being plucked or trodden upon (John 15:18, 19).
- The lily’s trumpet-shape evokes the “trumpet of God,” which is sounded at the resurrection–rapture (1 Thess. 4:16).
- The lily’s radiant white color symbolizes the righteousness of the Bride, arrayed in fine linen, at the Wedding of Messiah (Rev. 19:8, 9).
- The lily’s beauty symbolizes the loveliness of the Bride (Song 1:15).

- The lily's intoxicating scent represents the perfume of the Bride (Song 1:12).
- "The Lilies" is the title of the background music played at the Wedding of Messiah (Psalm 45).
- Lilies and various flowers traditionally adorn synagogues on Pentecost as a reminder of the wedding between God and Israel at Sinai (Ex. 34:3). For the same reason, Jewish wedding canopies, or chuppahs, are similarly adorned.

Finally, seeing that the Bride, or Church, is the ultimate expression of God's "Temple" (1 Cor. 3:16), it is significant that lily motifs were found in key parts of Solomon's Temple: The tops of the pillars of the Temple were shaped like lilies (1 Kings 7:21). Also, the Temple's huge bronze basin, used for the ceremonial purification of priests, had a brim shaped like "a lily blossom" (2 Chron. 4:5).

To sum up, the lily symbolizes:

- The Church.
- The Bride.
- Beauty, purity, and righteousness.
- Resurrection.
- The Wedding of Messiah.
- The Temple of God.

With the above themes in view, it seems plausible that the rapture–wedding of the Church could take place during the season of blossoming lilies.

When do lilies blossom in Israel?

The lily mentioned in Song of Solomon, thought to be the *Lilium candidum*, or "Madonna Lily," puts forth flowers from May through June.

NOTES:

1. The *Lilium candidum*, or Madonna Lily, is a fragrant, white, trumpet-shaped flower with six petals, and a pistil with six long stamens: <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/flowers-in-israel>

2. Lilies are also compared to believers in Luke: “Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these” (Luke 12:27).

3. The shepherd–bridegroom in Song 2, metaphorically described as a “gazelle,” is said to “feed among the lilies” (Song 2:16). The imagery is fitting as actual gazelles are known to feed in lily fields. Ellicott’s Bible Commentary notes: “Our flower [the lily] delights most in the valleys, but it is also found in the mountains ... Gazelles still delight to feed among them, and you can scarcely ride through the woods north of Tabor, where these lilies abound, without frightening [the animals] from their flowery pasture.”

4. In Song chapter 6, the shepherd is seen gathering lilies (v. 2).

5. The lily’s transformation from a bulb, buried in the earth, to a beautiful flower each spring further evokes resurrection (Matt. 12:40).

6. The ancient Israelites regarded the lily as the choicest among flowers and used it as a source of perfume.

7. Psalm 45 commentary (Lilies and the Wedding of Messiah):

<https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/matthew-henry-complete/psalms/45.html>

8. A contemporary song called Erev Shel Shoshanim, meaning “Evening of Lilies,” or “Evening of Roses,” is often used as wedding music at Jewish nuptials.

Erev Shel Shoshanim lyrics:

Evening of roses (or lilies)

Let us go out to the grove

Myrrh, perfumes, and Frankincense

Is the carpet under your feet

Night falls slowly

And a wind of rose blows

Let me whisper a song for you slowly

A song of love

Dawn and the dove coos

Your hair is full of dewdrops

Your lips are as roses unto the morning

I will pick them for myself

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erev_Shel_Shoshanim

<https://www.riseupandsing.org/songs/erev-shel-shoshanim>

9. According to tradition, when the Israelites gathered at the base of Mount Sinai to receive the commandments, the normally barren desert miraculously bloomed with greenery and flowers.

10. The link between Pentecost (wheat harvest) and lilies is highlighted in Song 7 where the Shulammite's beloved adoringly compares her waist to a "mound of wheat encircled by lilies" (Song 7:2).

11. Blooming season for *Lilium candidum*:

<https://flora.org.il/en/plants/LILCAN/>

<https://www.thespruce.com/growing-madonna-lily-lilium-candidum-5100935>

12. Miscellaneous: Lilies are a common motif in Christian traditions and art. One tradition is that lilies grew where Jesus' tears and blood fell from the cross. Another is that lilies were found in the Garden of Gethsemane after the crucifixion. Because white lilies symbolize purity and virginity, they are also found in paintings of the Annunciation, the announcement of the Incarnation by the angel Gabriel to Mary.