

# SONG OF SOLOMON – INTRODUCTION

## Meet Solomon

Solomon was a son of David, born to him by Bathsheba, who had been the wife of Uriah the Hittite (2 Samuel 11:26-27; 12:24). He would receive the throne when his father died.

Solomon is שלמה {shalomoh} in the Hebrews, and means peaceful. It is related to the Hebrew greeting “shalom,” which also means peace. The prophet Nathan gave him a second name, Jedidiah (2 Samuel 12:25), which means “beloved of God.”

Though he was blessed with long life and riches, Solomon is perhaps best known for his wisdom. The LORD had said to him in a dream, “Ask what I shall give you.” (1 Kings 3:5). His request was, *...give to Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and evil.* **(1 Kings 3:9)**

His wisdom was so great, we read that

*...all the earth sought the presence of Solomon to hear his wisdom which God had put in his heart.* **(1 Kings 10:24)**

He was a prolific writer. It is recorded of him that

*...he spake three thousand proverbs: and his songs were a thousand and five.* **(1 Kings 4:32)**

The book of Proverbs is a record of his wisdom (1:1; 10:1; 25:1; Ecclesiastes 12:9), but of the multitude of songs Solomon wrote, we have just one. He may have considered this to be the greatest of his songs, labeling it as “the song of songs.”



*The song of songs,  
which is Solomon's.*  
**(Song 2:12)**

*Sharon – a plain of surpassing beauty in  
Palestine covered with fields of golden grain,  
olive-groves, and rich abundance of flowers.*  
**(info from American Tract Society) Dictionary**

None of Solomon's works have content in them that would affirm an absolute date of writing. However, it is commonly accepted that Song of Solomon was written early in his life, prior to the time when his foreign wives turned him away from the Lord.

## Interpretations

Our desire in looking at the Song of Solomon, as it is with any portion of the Bible, is to understand what the text is about. Though most of the Bible text should be read and understood literally, there are some segments of the Bible that have varying degrees of symbolism. This is the case, not just with Revelation, but also with the parables and in some of the poetic texts. It is therefore a valid question to ask how Song of Solomon should be interpreted.

There are a variety of ways people have approached the Song of Solomon. We will only address the most prominent methods here.

### Solomon & Wife

This is the most obvious interpretation of the book. There is a man (Solomon) and a woman (the Shulamite), and a simple read of the book reveals they are in love. A few things in the book are foreign to us, as their culture is different than our own, but the intimate conversation in the book is unmistakable.

### A couple of Christian songs from the Song of Solomon:

♪ The Lily of the Valley  
(Song of Solomon 2:1)

♪ His Banner Over Me Is Love  
(Song of Solomon 2:4)

## *Four Basic Interpretations:*

### LITERAL

*Solomon & wife*

### DRAMA

*A theatrical play*

### FIGURE

*God & Israel*

### FIGURE

*Christ & Church*

Solomon would eventually have many wives, but it seems from Song of Solomon 3:11 that this was likely his first wife, as she points to the crown made for him by his mother for this occasion. Recall, his mother gave him instruction on the woman he should marry (Proverbs 31).

### A Theatrical Play

There are some who think the Song of Solomon is no-thing more than a fictional story or play script. There is no evidence that the Hebrew people conducted theatrical productions as may be found in other ancient cultures. But, even if it is a "story," since we know that Solomon is real, it is no stretch to also think the Shulamite may also be real.

### God & Israel

It was a common rabbinical view that the text pictured the love of God for Israel. This is not an unprecedented application of a marriage. The book of Hosea uses the prophet's marriage to Gomer to display the

unfaithfulness of Israel to God (Hosea 1:2; 3:1). If Song of Solomon is taken as the same type of image, it shows the beauty of the relationship between the Lord God and His chosen people during the days of faithfulness.

#### Christ & Church

A third approach to the Song is that it is prophetic of the Christ and his bride, the church. Paul used the image of a husband and wife to speak of the Lord and His people (Ephesians 5:22-33).

Images in the Solomon's Song have been used in hymns and spiritual songs which Christians sing. The "Lily of the Valley" appears in Song 2:1. "His Banner Over Me Is Love" is from Song 2:4.

#### Which Interpretation?

So, which interpretation is correct? I would suggest that one cannot go wrong with a literal interpretation. The language throughout the book bears witness to an intimate relationship between Solomon and the Shulamite woman. This cannot be denied.

Beyond this, I do not see how either the rabbinical or a prophetic view of the church do any harm to the text, though neither is set forth as the purpose of the book from the text in any manner at all. I would be very

Solomon – Heb. שלמה

Peaceful

Shulamite – Heb. שולמית

Peaceful

Jerusalem – Heb. ירושלים

Founded peaceful

cautious about any dogmatic application of the Song of Solomon in either of these directions.

## People & Places

Our understanding of a text is limited to our understanding of the words used in it. There are some words in the Song of Solomon that we should be aware of. Here is a short (by no means exhaustive) glossary of words used in the Song of Solomon.

#### People

Solomon – *peaceful*, related to the Hebrew shalom

Shulamite – *peaceful*, related to the Hebrew shalom. This is essentially a pet name which Solomon gave his queen.

#### Places

Jerusalem – means *founded peacefully*, capital of Israel.

Sharon – a plain in Judah

Lebanon – lit. white mount, a mountain range in Judah

Tirzah – a place in Judah, means delightfulness

# SONG OF SOLOMON 1:1-19

## SHULAMITE

Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth - for your love is better than wine. Because of the fragrance of your good ointments, your name is ointment poured forth; therefore the virgins love you. Draw me away!

## DAUGHTERS OF JERUSALEM

We will run after you.

## SHULAMITE

The king has brought me into his chambers.

## DAUGHTERS OF JERUSALEM

We will be glad and rejoice in you. We will remember your love more than wine.

## SHULAMITE

Rightly do they love him.

## A Longing For Him

### SONG OF SOLOMON 1:2-4

Several translations provide identities in the text to reveal who the speaker is. This is a matter of interpretation and not part of the recorded text. That said, it is acknowledged that more than one speaker is in the text, and we must determine what is said by whom in order to understand what is written.

The song begins in the early stages of their relationship. They are not yet married. She expresses her love for him, and anticipates the experience of his kisses. Even his smell captivated her.

In speaking of his name, she exalts his character (Proverbs 22:1; Ecclesiastes 7:1). It is a man's character that gives value to his name. It is this last quality which caused the virgins to love him (v 3). It was his excellent character that attracted her to him, and caused her to declare, "Draw me away!"

The maidens with the young woman shared her excitement about the king. She spoke of their love for the king, and they confirm it in their own words.

The young woman says that the king had brought her into his chambers. This may be a statement of anticipation and expectation – she longed for intimacy with him. If the text is not prospective; if he did in fact bring her into his chambers, it should be acknowledged that such did not involve sin or temptation. Note, the chambers (plural), is not a bed room, but living quarters; and likely in the company of others.

*...because of the fragrance of your good ointments, your name is ointment poured forth... (Song 1:2)*

# Her Insecurity

## SONG OF SOLOMON 1:5-11

The young woman seems to be embarrassed by the darkness of her skin. It is not a matter of race, but of labour. She had been out working in the vineyard under the heat of the sun. She was concerned about how people would look at a woman who worked in the vineyards (a manual worker) vying for the king's heart. In tending to the family's vineyard (lit.), she had not taken care of her own vineyard (fig.).

This is the only time **אָרַר** is translated "angry". It is not that her brothers were angry with her, but more likely that she attributes the burnt, dry nature of her skin to their insistence that she labour in the family vineyard.

David worked in the fields as a shepherd in the days of his youth, but it is unlikely that Solomon ever did. Though he was not a shepherd, he bore the good qualities one might associate with a shepherd. She desired his leadership in her life.

### SHULAMITE

I am dark, but lovely, O daughters of Jerusalem, like the tents of Kedar, like the curtains of Solomon. Do not look upon me, because I am dark, because the sun has tanned me. My mother's sons were angry with me; they made me the keeper of the vineyards, but my own vineyard I have not kept.

Tell me, O you whom I love, where you feed your flock, where you make it rest at noon. For why should I be as one who veils herself by the flocks of your companions?

### THE BELOVED

If you do not know, O fairest among women, follow in the footsteps of the flock, and feed your little goats beside the shepherds' tents. I have compared you, my love, to my filly among Pharaoh's chariots. Your cheeks are lovely with ornaments, your neck with chains of gold.

**Angry – Heb. אָרַר, charar, khaw-rar'**

*A primitive root; to glow, i.e. literally (to melt, burn, dry up) or figuratively (to show or incite passion); be angry, burn, dry, kindle. (Strong's)*

The shepherd/sheep relationship is used elsewhere of the man/woman relationship. The prophet Nathan used this image in his parable before David after his sin with Bathsheba (2 Samuel 12:3).

She wanted to be his, and not to veil herself among his companions. The veil could refer to mourning (ie. if she were not with him, that would be a cause of mourning), or it may indicate that she is not interested in following in the way of Tamar, who veiled herself and played the harlot (Genesis 38:13-15).

Her insecurity and doubt is evident, but he assures her. When he looks at her, he does not see a sun-dried, unkept woman who cannot find her way into his life. She should know his love for her. In saying, "...if you do not know ... follow...", he is not sending her away or rejecting her. Her doubts are unfounded. The sense is that she ought to know by now; what more could he do to demonstrate to her that she need not be worried about whether he loves her or not?

## Song of Solomon

To further reassure her of his love, he compares her to a filly among the horses of Pharaoh's chariots. How desirable would a single mare be in the midst of a host of stallions? This is how desired the young woman was. She was the fairest among women, and among men, greatly admired.

To further emphasize his love for her, he exalts her beauty which is adorned by ornaments and chains of gold. These were not the cause of her beauty, but simply accentuated her beauty.

The maidens sought to support her and build her up, offering to make more ornaments for her, to accentuate her beauty even more.



### SHULAMITE

While the king is at his table, my spikenard sends forth its fragrance. A bundle of myrrh is my beloved to me, that lies all night between my breasts. My beloved is to me a cluster of henna blooms in the vineyards of En Gedi.

### THE BELOVED

Behold, you are fair, my love. Behold, you are fair. You have dove's eyes.

### SHULAMITE

Behold, you are handsome, my beloved! Yes, pleasant! Also our bed is green. The beams of our houses are cedar, and our rafters of fir.

## Mutual Adoration

### SONG OF SOLOMON 1:12-17

Her fears being addressed, we now see their mutual love expressed.

In the growing stages of love, even the slightest things will result in a butterfly feeling. Seeing him at his banquet table spurs her attraction. Sending the fragrance of her spikenard forth is a sentiment of magnetism. Her desire is that he is as moved by her by her scent as she is by his sight.

Woudstra indicates that,

*Hebrew women often wore small bags of myrrh between their breasts.*

She compares her beloved to the pleasant scent that comes from myrrh. Again, she likens him to a cluster of henna blooms (*camphire*, KJV) from En Gedi. It was a valuable plant, the leaves useful to produce a cosmetic dye.

Woudstra, Sierd, *"The Song of Solomon,"* Wycliffe Bible Commentary, pp. 595-604. Edited by Charles F. Pfeiffer & Everett F. Harrison. Chicago : Moody Press, 1962.

✿ *En Gedi – An oasis of fertility, also called Hazezon-Tamar, the city of palm trees, on the western shore of the Dead Sea. Its heights are 1,500 feet above the Dead Sea, with a beautiful fountain at 400 feet. This spring waters a fruitful valley below. (info from American Tract Society) Dictionary)*

Solomon responds to her with praise also. She was a beautiful woman, fair to look upon. He also spoke of her eyes, which were like doves. The dove is often seen as an image of tranquility and peace. Jesus said that the *"light of the body is the eye"* (Matthew 6:22; Luke 11:34). He did not see the light of her eyes by a momentary glance, but the inference seems to be that through staring deeply into her eyes, he saw the pleasant and peaceful soul whom he delighted in, and would eventually marry.



The final words in chapter 1 are by the young woman. In return for his delightful words, she again praised him, saying he was handsome. Note, the Hebrew word is the same as he used in verse 15, which is rendered "fair."

The word pleasant might otherwise be rendered as sweet. For the kind words which he had said, she reciprocates.

It seems odd at this point for her to speak of their bed and house, since they are not yet married. The word bed here may also be rendered as a couch. It is doubtful that it refers to a place to sleep, but perhaps where they would sit and talk. In fact, it may be that she is not referring to a piece of furniture at all, but to the outcome of the time shared together in a particular place. Green is used, not to indicate

upholstery colour, but to reveal that their relationship is flourishing from the time they have shared together.

It may be that Solomon owned several houses, but it is doubtful that the young woman is lauding him for his choice of cedar and fir for the beams and rafters of a house. As the couch is a metaphor for the place and time where their love has grown, this house is likely the same. The Hebrew word can be used in a wide variety of applications (*house, court, door, dungeon, family, tablet, inside, within, without, palace, place, home, prison, temple... Strong's*). The use of terms like green, cedars, and firs may lead us to conclude that they often sat together at some favourite outdoor spot; it may even have been the vineyards of En Gedi, or the mount which overlooked them (v 14).

**Fair – Heb. יפה, yapheh, yaw-feh'**

**Beautiful (literally or figuratively) : - beautiful, beauty, comely, fair (-est, one), goodly, pleasant, well. (Strong's)**

# SONG OF SOLOMON 2:1-17

## SHULAMITE

I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys.

## THE BELOVED

Like a lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters.

## SHULAMITE

Like an apple tree among the trees of the woods, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down in his shade with great joy, and his fruit was sweet to my taste.

He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love. Sustain me with cakes of raisins, refresh me with apples, for I am lovesick. His left hand is under my head, and his right hand embraces me. I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles or by the does of the field, do not stir up nor awaken love until it pleases.

## Love Blooms In Its Time

### SONG OF SOLOMON 2:1-7

Formerly she saw herself as an unkept vineyard (1:6), but now she identifies herself as a rose and a lily. The expressions of Solomon's love for her helped change her perception of herself.

To Solomon, this young woman is the "fairest among women" (1:8), his "filly among Pharaoh's chariots" (1:9), and now, "a lily among thorns" (2:2). No woman could compare to her.

The feeling is mutual, as she presents a similar contrast between him and other single men. How rare would it be to find a single luscious apple tree in the midst of a forest? Solomon is that lone apple tree, full of good fruit, surrounded by fruitless trees.

The young woman spoke to the maidens about Solomon's goodness to her. He hosted a banquet, and no doubt gave her a place of honour – displaying his love for her publicly. She was confident in his ability and intent to meet her needs (to sustain and refresh her), and in his protection (his banner & his hands).

She identifies herself as "lovesick." The word sick here can also mean weak or faint. She was not tired or sick of love, but rather was overwhelmed by love. Her love for Solomon exposed her need for him – she could not consider life without him. And as the context reveals, he was ready and able to tend to her needs, whether physical or emotional.

Apple – Heb. תפוח , tap-poo'-akh

An apple (from its fragrance), i.e. the fruit or the tree (probably includes others of the pome order, as the quince, the orange, etc.); an apple. (Strong's)

*The flowers appear on the earth; the time of singing has come... (Song 2:12)*

*Sharon – a plain of surpassing beauty in Palestine covered with fields of golden grain, olive-groves, and rich abundance of flowers.*

(info from American Tract Society Dictionary)



As she shared her experience of love with the maidens, she reveals that love cannot be rushed. For true affection and mutual yearning which will last a lifetime to develop, we must allow love the time to grow. Gazelles or does are skittish animals. To approach them, one must use patience and establish trust. So it is with human relationships.

## Building Intimacy

### SONG OF SOLOMON 2:8-17

To this point, the text has focused on interaction between Solomon and the Shulamite in Jerusalem (1:4; 12; 2:4), and perhaps En Gedi (1:14-17). Now, the setting changes, as Solomon comes to her home in Lebanon (2:8-9; 4:8, 15). Solomon came for a visit, obviously excited to see her (2:8-9). Words like leaping and skipping are not normally associated with a king, and yet that is exactly how she describes his approach to her home. His enthusiasm is pictured as that of a gazelle or young stag.

#### SHULAMITE

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. For lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth; the time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land. The fig tree puts forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grapes give a good smell. Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away! O my dove, in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the cliff, let me see your face, let me hear your voice; for your voice is sweet, and your face is lovely.'

Catch us the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vines, for our vines have tender grapes. My beloved is mine, and I am his. He feeds his flock among the lilies. Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved, and be like a gazelle or a young stag upon the mountains of Bether.

**Lebanon – Heb. לבנון**

*leb-aw-nohn'*

*lit. white mountains, named for either the excess of limestone or the white peaks in winter. The range is in north Palestine, with several peaks above 10,000 ft. It's highest mount is Hermon.*

*The western terraces are covered with vines, olives figs, etc.  
(info from ATSD)*

He came to invite her to go for a walk in the countryside (2:10, 13). He gives an exceptional description of spring – budding flowers, singing birds, fresh figs, ripe grapes – pleasant smells and sounds surrounded them. A springtime walk is a refreshing venture – how much more so when accompanied by the one whom you love?

Could this wonderful picture describe not just the spring day, but also Solomon's perspective on life when he is able to share time with his love? Perhaps the vibrant life and newness of spring is used as a metaphor for the joy in Solomon's heart.

The reference to the clefts of the rock and the secret places of the cliff is not a suggestion that they go rock climbing, but a desire on his part that they share time alone. In a secret place, that is, in a private setting, he desires to sit and talk with her face to face. It is natural to desire time alone with a spouse to be. It is appropriate for such time to be spent, but it must be held in purity.

## Song of Solomon

Though foxes may be detrimental to a successful vineyard, it is unlikely that verse 15 is about a literal vineyard or an actual fox hunt. It is more likely these foxes are representative of challenges which could spoil the love between Solomon and the young woman. It is better to catch the foxes before they ravage the vineyard than to sit back and salvage the remains afterward. It is better to address the problems that may trouble a relationship before they cripple or destroy the relationship.

Whether it was Solomon or the woman who mentioned the need to catch and remove the foxes from their vineyard, we do not know. It doesn't matter who brought it up, since working out any troubles which come their way needs to be a mutual work. Indeed, all couples, whether before or in marriage, will face trials; the success of the relationship will depend on difficulties being identified, addressed, and solved.

The woman's focus for their relationship is evident. She declares:

*My beloved is mine, and I am his.  
He feeds his flock among the lilies.*

A very basic tenet of successful marriage (though they are not yet married, they are about to be), is that you are not your own. You belong to your spouse (1 Corinthians 7:3-4).



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She was secure in knowing that her needs would be met by him; he would tend to the flock (her) among the lilies.

It seems that in verse 17, she sends him away in anticipation of the time when they would be married. As the day drew to a close, the time of his visit with her would come to a close also. As he was a gazelle or a young stag in coming to visit with her, she bids him to also depart in the same manner. It is not that she does not seek to have his presence (see 3:1), but they must wait in anticipation for the consummation of their marriage, which is soon to come.

Bether may be a literal mountain, but the definition of the word is intriguing. It means separation or trial. Rather than the speaking of a mountain or range where he might go, it seems likely she was simply speaking of the separation which would result from his departure.

# SONG OF SOLOMON 3:1-11

## SHULAMITE

By night on my bed I sought the one I love; I sought him, but I did not find him. 'I will rise now,' I said, 'and go about the city; in the streets and in the squares I will see the one I love.' I sought him, but I did not find him. The watchmen who go about the city found me; I said, 'Have you seen the one I love?' Scarcely had I passed by them, when I found the one I love. I held him and would not let him go, until I had brought him to the house of my mother, and into the chamber of her who conceived me. I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles or by the does of the field, do not stir up nor awaken love until it pleases.

Sought – Heb. **בָּקַשׁ**, baw-kash'

To search out (by any method, specifically in worship or prayer); by implications, to strive after: ask, beg, beseech, desire, enquire, get, make inquisition, procure, (make) request, require, seek (for). (Strong's)

## The Shulamite's Dream

### SONG OF SOLOMON 3:1-5

Song of Solomon 3 begins with the Shulamite sharing of dream which she had. The things described took place "by night on my bed" (v 1). She does not get up in the middle of the night to go looking for Solomon. All that she mentions seems to be a dream that she had.

In her dream, she looked for Solomon, searching in the streets and in the squares. Though she looked diligently for him, she did not find him. As she searched for him, the watchmen of the city found her. She asked if they had seen her beloved, but it appears they had not. However, shortly after passing by the watchmen, she finds Solomon, and having found him, takes him to a place which is dear to her – her mother's chamber.

Two recurring themes are in her dream – "the one I love" and her pursuit of him. It was a dream about her beloved, motivated by her love and desire for him. She longed for the time when they would finally be together.

The bride had cautioned the daughters of Jerusalem previously not to rush love. Even at this stage in their relationship, on the verge of marriage, there is a degree of timidity in her about their relationship. In her dream, she held him and would not let go. She still seemed to fear that love might depart like a gazelle or a doe. Had she been patient enough? Was their bond of love secure? Her mother's chamber is an image of marriage (cf. Genesis 24:67), a thought of security to end a nervous dream well.

***By night on my bed I sought the one I love; I sought him, but I did not find him. (Song 3:1)***

***Then Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent; and he took Rebekah and she became his wife, and he loved her. So Isaac was comforted after his mother's death. (Genesis 24:67)***

# The Wedding

## SONG OF SOLOMON 3:6-11

The Shulamite's dream had a happy ending – the girl got the boy. Beginning at verse 6, it is no longer her dream, but reality. The day of their wedding had come!

She looked out to the wilderness, and saw a great site coming into her view. There was Solomon, not by himself as when he came to visit her in the springtime, but with a huge wedding procession. The smell must have been amazing – myrrh, frankincense, fragrant powders. As she looked, she saw her beloved seated on a specially designed chariot, surrounded by sixty of his finest men.

The chariot was a mix of the finest materials. The base was made of the cedars of Lebanon, adorned with pillars of silver and supports of gold. The seat was of fine purple, and the interior was embroidered by the daughters of Jerusalem.

In this marvelous chariot was Solomon, decorated with a crown from his mother (Bathsheba) especially for this, his wedding day.

### SHULAMITE

Who is this coming out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all the merchant's fragrant powders? Behold, it is Solomon's couch, with sixty valiant men around it, of the valiant of Israel. They all hold swords, being experts in war. Every man has his sword on his thigh because of fear in the night. Of the wood of Lebanon Solomon the king made himself a palanquin: he made its pillars of silver, its support of gold, its seat of purple, its interior paved with love by the daughters of Jerusalem. Go forth, O daughters of Zion, and see king Solomon with the crown with which his mother crowned him on the day of his wedding, the day of the gladness of his heart.

### Solomon's mother Bathsheba

*Solomon's mother gave him instruction about the virtuous woman. Proverbs 31 give "the utterance which his mother taught him" (v 1). It is likely that this was Solomon's first wife, and that she was the woman Bathsheba desired for him. Thus, she commemorated the occasion with a crown.*

There were three parts to a wedding in the ancient Near East. First, the groom's parents selected a bride for their son. This involved securing the permission of the bride's parents and the approval of both the bride and the groom themselves. Though the parents of the young people arranged the marriage, they usually obtained the consent of both the bride and groom. Second, on the wedding day the groom proceeded to the bride's house accompanied by a group of his friends. He then escorted her to the site of the wedding ceremony and finally took her to their new residence accompanied by their friends. Physical union consummated the marriage the night after the wedding ceremony took place. Third, the couple feasted with their friends usually for seven days following the wedding ceremony.

(Dr. Constable's Notes on the Song of Solomon, p. 17)

# SONG OF SOLOMON 4:1-16

## THE BELOVED

Behold, you are fair, my love! Behold, you are fair! You have dove's eyes behind your veil. Your hair is like a flock of goats, going down from Mount Gilead. Your teeth are like a flock of shorn sheep which have come up from the washing, every one of which bears twins, and none is barren among them. Your lips are like a strand of scarlet, and your mouth is lovely. Your temples behind your veil are like a piece of pomegranate. Your neck is like the tower of David, built for an armory, on which hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men. Your two breasts are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle, which feed among the lilies. Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away, I will go my way to the mountain of myrrh and to the hill of frankincense. You are all fair, my love, and there is no spot in you.

## The Beautiful Bride

### SONG OF SOLOMON 4:1-7

Solomon's description of his bride seems awkward to us. What woman wants to be compared to a variety of beasts (goats, sheep, gazelles), or a tower? And yet as we consider the images used, there is significance to each one, and his depiction is in fact highly complementary.

Dove's Eyes – This figure of purity and beauty had already been used by Solomon to describe the Shulamite.

Flock of Goats – The hair of Eastern goats is "fine like silk"<sup>1</sup> and dark. She no doubt devoted considerable time in fixing her hair for this special day.

Shorn Sheep – Her teeth were glistening white, and perfectly aligned. None were "barren," that is, she was not missing any.

Strand of Scarlet – It would seem that red lipstick is not just a modern adorning, but stretched back at least to 1,000 B.C..

Pomegranate – Her complexion was rosy, like a freshly cut pomegranate. The word "temples" may be literally rendered "thinness" and is used to speak of the side of the head (ie. cheeks).

Tower of David – A long neck is in some cultures a mark of beauty. So it was to Solomon. He compared her neck to the glory of David's tower – a strong and dignified edifice. Perhaps the image of the soldiers' shields represents jewelry which was upon her neck.

*You are all fair, my love,  
and there is no spot in you.  
(Song 4:7)*

*As Solomon speaks of his bride, it might lead us to think that she was an ancient supermodel. It should be that the most beautiful woman in the world to a man is his wife.*

(BEAUTY IS IN THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER)

Two Fawns – The image of deer to refer to a woman's breasts is also used in Proverbs 5:19. Her youth is perhaps inferred by the use of "fawns" rather than "does". Myrrh was kept in a bundle between the breasts as a perfume (1:13). Solomon expresses his delight in her breasts in stating that he would go "to the mountain of myrrh."

## Better Than Wine

### SONG OF SOLOMON 4:8-11

Solomon bids his bride to come with him from Lebanon. It is plausible that these were his words when he arrived for her in Lebanon with the wedding procession. However, in the context of his description of her physical attributes, it is more likely that they had already departed Lebanon. It may be that he is simply encouraging in her a change of focus from her role as a daughter in Lebanon to being his wife in Jerusalem (cf. Genesis 2:24).

He vividly describes the affect she had on his life; she had "ravished" his heart. He cites both her look at him (your eye) and his look at her (seeing her necklace). She is called "sister" (4:10, 12; 5:1-2), a term used for togetherness.

A series of images are used to convey how sweet she is to him – "better than wine," "than all spices," "honey and milk." Everything about her, her appearance, her love for him, her scent – all these enraptured him.

Ravished – *Heb. labab*

A primitive root; properly to be enclosed (as if with fat); by implication to unheard, that is (in a good sense) transport (with love), or (in a bad sense) stultify; also to make cakes : – make cakes, ravish, be wise. (Strong's)

#### THE BELOVED

Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse, with me from Lebanon. Look from the top of Amana, from the top of Senir and Hermon, from the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards. You have ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse; you have ravished my heart with one look of your eyes, with one link of your necklace. How fair is your love, my sister, my spouse! How much better than wine is your love, and the scent of your perfumes than all spices? Your lips, O my spouse, drip as the honeycomb; honey and milk are under your tongue; and the fragrance of your garments is like the fragrance of Lebanon.

### Proverbs 5:18-19

*Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice with the wife of your youth. As a loving deer and a graceful doe, let her breasts satisfy you at all times; and always be enraptured with her love.*



## Song of Solomon

# The Garden of Love

## SONG OF SOLOMON 4:12-16

Solomon uses three images to speak of the Shulamite's virginity. She presented herself as "a garden enclosed ... a spring shut up, a fountain sealed." No man had ever walked in her proverbial garden, nor drunk from the spring. He describes the pleasant fruit, the fragrant scent, and the vibrancy of her love.

Though she had been a closed garden before, now, she was an open garden to Solomon. In fact, she refers to her garden as his garden, and the fruit of her garden as his fruit. Genesis 2:24 says that the man and woman become one flesh. Paul spoke of the intimacy in the husband/wife relationship,

*Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. (1 Corinthians 7:3-4)*

Now that they were wed, Solomon and his bride shared sexual intimacy. The record of their experience is vivid, and yet delicately conveyed.

### THE BELOVED

A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse, a spring shut up, a fountain sealed. Your plants are an orchard of pomegranates with pleasant fruits, fragrant henna with spikenard, spikenard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense, myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices a fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams of Lebanon.

### SHULAMITE

Awake, O north wind, and come, O south! Blow upon my garden, that its spices may flow out. Let my beloved come to his garden and eat its pleasant fruits.



# SONG OF SOLOMON 5:1-16

## Exaltation Of Intimacy

### SONG OF SOLOMON 5:1

The Shulamite invited Solomon to come to her garden, to enjoy her smell and the fruit of her body. She spoke of her garden (body) as his garden, for they were now husband and wife.

The opening verse of chapter 5 is Solomon's response to her invitation, and his description of their first night together. He had anticipated their sexual intimacy (Song 4:9, 11, 16), and now expresses the full satisfaction which it brought.

The Song of Solomon is candid in its reference to sexual intimacy between Solomon and the Shulamite. His intent is not to make the reader (or his friends) uncomfortable, nor to give a detailed account of their encounter, but he spoke of it in general, exalting God's plan for a man and woman. Marriage originated with God, and pre-existed all other human relationship.

Some men characterize marriage as a prison (Matthew 19:10). Solomon called upon his friends to rejoice with him and continue to celebrate his union with the Shulamite bride.

#### THE BELOVED

Awake, O north wind, and come, O south! Blow upon my garden, that its spices may flow out. Let my beloved come to his garden and eat its pleasant fruits.

#### THE BELOVED

I have come to my garden, my sister, my spouse; I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk.  
Eat, O friends! Drink, yes, drink deeply, O beloved ones.

*...I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk. (Song 4:7)*

**Honeymoon** – In many ancient cultures, the bride's father would supply the groom with a month's supply of wine made of honey. It was the "honey month". Solomon's reference to honey and wine may indicate that this was also the practice among the Hebrews. He called for his friends to celebrate with him – to eat and to drink.



# Another Dream

## SONG OF SOLOMON 5:2-7

The woman's dreams reveal her insecurity. Before they were married, she dreamt that she couldn't find Solomon. Now, even after their wedding, she has the same dream.

She heard Solomon's voice, beckoning her to open the door. Since he would have his own chamber in which he slept, it is likely his intent was to share an intimate evening together. Though she delighted to hear his voice, she gave an excuse to avert him – she was already in bed. He tried the door, but it was locked.

His voice and his attempted to unlatch the door stirred her heart to open to him. She got up and went to the door, so that he might come in and be with her, but by the time she opened the door, he was gone. As she did in her previous dream, she went looking for him.

The watchmen striking her and the keepers of the walls taking her veil are part of the dream. Do these perhaps show her displeasure in herself for refusing his advance? In discouraging his love, she effectively sent him away. Is the watchman's blow her "beating herself up"? Is the keepers removal of her veil a doubt in her own mind about her worth (and current failure) as Solomon's wife?

### THE SHULAMITE

I sleep, but my heart is awake; it is the voice of my beloved! He knocks, saying, 'Open for me, my sister, my love, my dove, my perfect one; for my head is covered with dew, my locks with the drops of the night.' I have taken off my robe; how can I put it on again? I have washed my feet; how can I defile them? My beloved put his hand by the latch of the door, and my heart yearned for him. I arose to open for my beloved, and my hands dripped with myrrh, my fingers with liquid myrrh, on the handles of the lock. I opened for my beloved, but my beloved had turned away and was gone. My heart leaped up when he spoke. I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer. The watchmen who went about the city found me. They struck me, they wounded me; the keepers of the walls took my veil away from me.

*The custom in our society is that the man and woman share the same bedroom and bed. This is not the true in every culture, and was not the case in ancient Hebrew custom. She dreams that Solomon came to her door late one night.*



## My Beloved, My Friend

### SONG OF SOLOMON 5:8-16

Again the woman identifies herself as lovesick (Song 2:5). She is not tired of Solomon; rather she is overcome by her emotions for him.

The daughters of Jerusalem helped to alleviate her insecurity before she was married. They serve the same purpose in her dream, provoking her to think about what makes Solomon special to her.

In chapter 4, Solomon gave a lengthy and vibrant description of his wife. Now, her dream prompts her to do the same.

White and ruddy – Perhaps to describe his complexion. An equally acceptable translation would be “bright and rosy.” His appearance set him above others.

His head and locks – Gold denotes value. Of course, Solomon’s head would have a crown upon it, but it was he who was valuable, not it. He had long black hair.

Eyes like doves – He had used the image of doves to describe her eyes also. He was a man of purity and tenderness. His eyes were not bloodshot, but “washed with milk.”

His cheeks and lips – The indication is that he was fragrantly perfumed, and had soft lips. He did not present himself to her as a rugged “manly man”, he groomed himself for her

#### THE SHULAMITE

I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my beloved, that you tell him I am lovesick.

#### DAUGHTERS OF JERUSALEM

What is your beloved more than another beloved, O fairest among women? What is your beloved more than another beloved, that you so charge us?

#### THE SHULAMITE

My beloved is white and ruddy, chief among ten thousand. His head is like the finest gold; his locks are wavy, and black as a raven. His eyes are like doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and fitly set. His cheeks are like a bed of spices, banks of scented herbs. His lips are lilies, dripping liquid myrrh. His hands are rods of good set with beryl. His body is carved ivory inlaid with sapphires. His legs are pillars of marble set on bases of fine gold. His countenance is like Lebanon, excellent as the cedars. His mouth is most sweet, yes, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem!

His hands and body – He may have literally had gold rings on his hands, but the image of that of strength and provision. The description of his body indicates that he was well sculpted, at least in her perspective.

His legs and countenance – She describes him as being strong, secure, and handsome. The word countenance is commonly used to describe one’s appearance overall. She is completely satisfied with him.

His mouth – Not just his lips, but everything about his mouth; the smell of his breath, the words on his tongue, the kiss of his lips.

***My beloved, my friend – As distraught as she was in her dream, having rejected Solomon’s pursuit of an intimate evening with her (again, in the dream), it was beneficial for her, as she turned her attention in the dream to the reasons why she looked upon Solomon as her beloved, as her best friend. The dream was a moment of reflection, and an opportunity for confirmation of her love for him.***

# SONG OF SOLOMON 6:1-13

## DAUGHTERS OF JERUSALEM

Where has your beloved gone, O fairest among women? Where has your beloved turned aside, that we may seek him with you?

## THE SHULAMITE

My beloved has gone to his garden, to the beds of spices, to feed his flock in the gardens, and to gather lilies. I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine. He feeds his flock among the lilies.

## Looking For The Beloved

### SONG OF SOLOMON 6:1-3

Remember, we are in the midst of a dream which the bride of Solomon had. She had rejected an advance by Solomon, and when she had reconsidered, he was already gone (Song 5:2-6). The daughters of Jerusalem had prompted her to think upon her beloved – what made him special, why did she love him? The latter portion of chapter 5 was her response.

Now that she has confirmed her love for Solomon, the daughters offer to help her find the beloved. With her focus on him, she now knows where he is – he had gone to his garden (Song 6:2). Recall, the term garden has been used to speak of her body (Song 4:16). Her dream began with her being distressed about having rejected him, but now, he has come to his garden to enjoy the spices (scent) and feed from the garden.

The acknowledgment of their intimacy is made, as she declares the beloved to be her's, and herself to be his.

*I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine. He feeds his flock among the lilies.*  
(Song 6:3)

# Solomon's Return

## SONG OF SOLOMON 6:4-10

She has found Solomon (or rather, he had returned to her), and now she hears him speak. Notice that much of what he says is from his wedding night speech to her.

He likens her to a pair of cities, Tirzah and Jerusalem, both lovely and exalted cities. This conveys the elegance of her beauty. He then speaks of her as an army with banners (a raised flag). The KJV uses the word "terrible," perhaps not the best way to convey the effect her eyes have on him. The NKJV, "awesome," is preferable. YLT reads, "awe-inspiring as bannered hosts." Her gaze overpowered him.

Solomon mentions 60 queens, 80 concubines and virgins without number. These women are not a haram belonging to Solomon. They are women who frequent Solomon's court, but they are not his wives. Recall, the indication in the book is that the Shulamite is Solomon's first wife. The queens may well be his brothers' wives. A concubine was a female servant. All these women are mentioned by way of comparison – the Shulamite outshines them all, she is the only one for him. The reference to her mother would again be a reference to their marriage (see the earlier dream). All these women do not compete with her; they exalt her.

### THE BELOVED

O my love, you are as beautiful as Tirzah, lovely as Jerusalem, awesome as an army with banners! Turn your eyes away from me, for they have overcome me. Your hair is like a flock of goats going down from Giliead. Your teeth are like a flock of sheep which have come up from the washing; every one bears twins, and none is barren among them. Like a piece of pomegranate are your temples behind your veil. There are sixty queens and eighty concubines, and virgins without number. My dove, my perfect one, is the only one, the only one of her mother, the favourite of the one who bore her. The daughters saw her and called her blessed, the queens and the concubines, and they praised her. Who is she who looks forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, awesome as an army with banners?



### TIRZAH

*Lit. benevolent, pleasing*  
***Tirzah was a royal city prior to Israel receiving the land of Canaan (Joshua 12:24), and was used as a royal city again after the separation of Israel from Judah (1 Kings 16:8, 15). It was the location of one of the king's residences.***

Three phases of the day (and night) are used to describe the Shulamite. She is as lovely as a sunrise – the dawning of a new day. Further, she exceeds the beauty of a moonlit night. And once more, she is as pure or lovely as a cloudless day. He declares again – how awesome his bride, the Shulamite is.



## The Shulamite Exalted

### SONG OF SOLOMON 6:11-13

The dream ends much better than it began. She had rejected her beloved, he had departed from her presence, and she could not find him. However, once she focused upon him and her love for him, there he was, come into her. She has authenticated her love for him by the description she gave of the beloved in Song 5:10-16. She has also reminded herself of his love for her, as she recalled his description of her from their wedding night.

He has come to her garden (Song 6:2), and she now reciprocates (Song 6:11). Again, keep in mind that the garden is used as a figure for the body.

Recall earlier in the dream, she was beating herself up (via the watchmen of the city) and discounted her worthy to wear her wedding veil (via the keepers of the wall). Now, her soul exalts her "as the chariots of my noble people." Her dream had taken her from the depths of defeat to the heights of exaltation. The power of a nation is displayed through its military – the chariots were such.

As her dream closes, there seems to be a tempering word – in this exalted stated, the people sought to look upon her, that she might be on display. Solomon steps in (not the Shulamite), simply asking

#### THE SHULAMITE

I went down to the garden of nuts to see the verdure of the valley, to see whether the vine had budded and the pomegranates had bloomed. Before I was even aware, my soul had made me as the chariots of my noble people.

#### THE NOBLE PEOPLE

Return, return, O Shulamite; return, return, that we may look upon you!

#### THE BELOVED

What would you see in the Shulamite as it were, the dance of two camps?

what they expected to see? The greatness of the chariots is seen in battle – did they want to see her in her glory? Nay, that was for Solomon alone. Is he perhaps protecting her from the limelight of celebrity as the queen of Israel?



***I'm So Glad I Was Dreaming*** – Country singer, Paul Overstreet, wrote a song in which he had been unfaithful to his spouse. As he enters the chorus, it becomes evident that it had been a dream. No doubt, when the Shulamite awoke from her dream, she would be happy that she had not truly rejected her beloved, but that she was only dreaming. What a blessing when we might receive warning through a dream, and not err in reality.

# SONG OF SOLOMON 7:1-13

## THE BELOVED

How beautiful are your feet in sandals, O prince's daughter! The curves of your thighs are like jewels, the work of the hands of a skilful workman. Your navel is a rounded goblet; it lacks no blended beverage. Your waist is a heap of wheat set about with lilies. Your two breasts are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle. Your neck is like an ivory tower, your eyes like the pools of Heshbon by the gate of Bath Rabbin. Your nose is like the tower of Lebanon which looks toward Damascus. Your head crowns you like Mount Carmel, and the hair of your head is like purple; a king is held captive by your tresses. How fair and how pleasant you are, O love, with your delights.

## The Beautiful Shulamite

### SONG OF SOLOMON 7:1-6

Solomon's continued passion for and attraction to the Shulamite is evident at the beginning of chapter 7. Again, he takes the occasion to describe the beauty of her body, and uses metaphoric languages to speak of their intimacy.

His mention of her feet and sandals is more likely a reference to her walk than a praise of her style of footwear. Many things are evident in a person's walk – vitality, confidence, mood, etc.. Most translations identify her as the "prince's daughter" (NKJV, KJV, ASV). Others refer to her as "daughter of Nadib" (YLT), "queenly maiden" (RSV), "O noble daughter" (ESV), or "a princess" (CEV).

Having started with her feet, he continues upward, considering her thighs, her navel and waist, her breasts, her neck, her eyes, her nose, the crown of her head and her hair.

He likens the curves of her thighs to jewels, not uncut or rough gems, but those which have been fashioned by a skilled jeweler.

Two Hebrew words are used in the text to speak of the bride's body. The NKJV renders them as "navel" and "waist", other translations provide a mix of navel, waist, belly, or body. He describes her body as a goblet or a wine glass (symmetric, flowing curves). The empty goblet is of no benefit, but she is not an empty goblet to him – as he speaks of her love, he acknowledges that she is like an always full cup. He speaks of her waist as a heap of wheat (golden) encircled with lilies (perhaps she wore a decorative belt or garment).

*How fair and how pleasant you are, O love, with your delights. (Song 7:6)*

**Prince** – Heb. Nadiyb  
*Properly, voluntary, i.e. generous; hence, magnanimous; as noun, a grandee (sometimes a tyrant); free, liberal (things), noble, prince, willing (hearted). (Strong's)*



He spoke of her breasts in Song 4:5, and does so again here. They are pictured as a pair of young deer – perhaps an indication of her youth.

Her neck was formerly referred to as a tower of David (Song 4:4). Now, he likens her neck to an ivory tower, smooth, clean, valuable.

Hesbon was a Levitical city in the tribe of Reuben (Joshua 21:39; Numbers 32:37). It had several pools and reservoirs throughout it – Bath Rabbim may have been one of the gates to the city.

Her nose was likened to the tower of Lebanon, overlooking Damascus. It is doubtful that he is saying she has a big nose, but more likely it is an acknowledgement of her beauty – not just her nose, but her entire face (tower and Damascus both).

The crown of her head was like Mount Carmel, which rises majestically in Palestine (Isaiah 35:2). Her hair was like a royal garment (purple).

All that he has described is why he was captivated by her. Everything about her was fair and pleasant; she was a treat or a delight to him at all times.

#### THE BELOVED

This stature of yours is like a palm tree, and your breasts like its clusters. I said, 'I will go up to the palm tree, I will take hold of its branches.' Let now your breasts be like clusters of the vine, the fragrance of your breath like apples, and the roof of your mouth like the best wine.

#### THE SHULAMITE

The wine goes down smoothly for my beloved, moving gently the lips of sleepers. I am my beloved's and his desire is toward me. Come, my beloved, let us go forth to the field; let us lodge in the villages. Let us get up early to the vineyards; let us see if the vine has budded, whether the grape blossoms are open, and the pomegranates are in bloom. There I will give you my love. The mandrakes give off a fragrance, and at our gates are pleasant fruits, all manner, new and old, which I have laid up for you, my beloved.



## Perfect Intimacy

### SONG OF SOLOMON 7:8-13

Lebanon was known for its beautiful palm trees in the valley below. Solomon had his own palm tree – the Shulamite. He expresses his desire for and delight in her body, as he describes what may be perceived as an intimate embrace and passionate kiss.

Unlike in her dream, she is entirely open to his advance. She basks in the fact that his desire is for her, and she invites him to share the wine with her, and to explore the field, the villages, and the vineyards. These all appear to be symbolic language to speak of their sexual exploration. She has an offering of various fruits for him, all manner of new and old, laid up for the beloved.

The language of chapter 7 shows an increase in the intensity of their sexual relationship and in their comfort with one another's body. Such is to be expected, and is needed in the marriage relationship (Hebrews 13:4; 1 Corinthians 7:2-5).

# SONG OF SOLOMON 8:1-14

## THE SHULAMITE

Oh, that you were like my brother, who nursed at my mother's breasts! If I should find you outside, I would kiss you; I would not be despised. I would lead you and bring you into the house of my mother, she who used to instruct me. I would cause you to drink the spiced wine, of the juice of my pomegranate.

His left hand is under my head, and his right hand embraces me. I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, do not stir up nor awaken love until it pleases.

## VIRGINS OF JERUSALEM

Who is this coming up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?

## THE BELOVED

I awakened you under the apple tree. There your mother brought you forth; there she who bore you brought you forth.

## Delight In The Beloved

### SONG OF SOLOMON 8:1-5

Why would the Shulamite wish for Solomon to be like a brother to her? In Hebrew culture, it appears public display of affection between family members (ie. siblings) was acceptable, but the same between a husband and wife was frowned upon. If he were her like her brother, it would not be a despised thing for her to kiss him in a public setting.

She enjoyed the private intimacy of marriage with Solomon; she had brought him to the house of her mother (a figure for marriage); he had drunk of the spiced wine and the juice of the pomegranate (a figure for sexual intimacy). In addition to this, she would love to show her love for him publicly.

Before they were married, she spoke of the security she felt in Solomon's arms (Song 2:6). Now, after they are married, she mentions her confidence in him again.

Formerly, she cautioned the virgins about rushing love – let it grow at its own pace (Song 2:7; 3:5). She again gives the warning. She was patient, and her love for Solomon and his for her had grown. The virgins acknowledge that, as they saw her leaning upon the beloved.

*His left hand is under my head, and his right hand embraces me. (Song 8:3)*

*It seems that Solomon had pursued the Shulamite in Lebanon. What the significance of the apple tree is would be hard to say without more details of their courtship. Her mother having brought her forth under the apple tree may refer to her birth, or perhaps to their marriage being an arrange marriage.*



### THE SHULAMITE

Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm; for love is as strong as death, jealousy as cruel as the grave; its flames are flames of fire, a most vehement flame. Many waters cannot quench love, nor can the floods drown it. If a man would give for love all the wealth of his house, it would be utterly despised.

## Dedication Of Her Love

### SONG OF SOLOMON 8:6-7

She desired to be the seal on his heart and arm. The king's seal was a valued possession. It was a verification of his word on written documents. It signified his approval. More important than his word to dignitaries was the verification of his word to the Shulamite. Though he give approval to a myriad of projects, none were so important as his bride.

In describing their love, she uses a series of powerful images. Love conquers as death (completely), as the grave as no escape, neither does love. It is like a flame which cannot be quenched (passion). It is more valuable than all a man's wealth (Solomon was wealthy!!!).

### THE SHULAMITE'S BROTHERS

We have a little sister, and she has no breasts. What shall we do for our sister in the day when she is spoken for? If she is a wall, we will build upon her a battlement of silver; and if she is a door, we will enclose her with boards of cedar.

### THE SHULAMITE

I am a wall, and my breasts like towers; then I became in his eyes as one who found peace. Solomon has a vineyard at Baal Hamon; he leased the vineyard to keepers; everyone was to bring for its fruit a thousand silver coins.

My own vineyard is before me. You, O Solomon, may have a thousand, and those who tend its fruit two hundred.

### THE BELOVED

You who dwell in the gardens, the companions listen for your voice let me hear it!

### THE SHULAMITE

Make haste, my beloved, and be like a gazelle or a young stag on the mountains of spices.



In these final verses, the Shulamite's life before her courtship with Solomon is considered. Her brothers' concern for her is evident, and they would do what was in her best interest, so that she might marry the right man. Solomon was the one. It was a mutual attraction from the start.

## Epilogue

### SONG OF SOLOMON 8:8-14

The brothers are not discussing her breast size, but seem to indicate that she was chaste, not flaunting herself. They would help in the day that she was to be spoken for, whether she be a wall (restrained) or a door (open) to the advances of Solomon.

She declared herself a wall – reserved, which was a point of attraction for Solomon. He was also physically attracted to her.

It appears that Solomon had leased out a vineyard, perhaps to the Shulamite woman's family. Is that maybe the vineyard she worked in (Song 1:6)? Regardless, she offered a vineyard in return – herself.

The final words characterize their love in its youth – he sought to hear her voice, as did others. Let it be for him alone. Her desire was for him alone also – she waited for him to come, like a gazelle or young stag. Here are the roots of love, from which blossomed the story of this song.

# SONG OF SOLOMON – REVIEW

## Why Include The Song Of Solomon?

### FACT:

*There are two books in the Bible which do not mention God – Song of Solomon and Esther.*

The Song of Solomon is unlike any other book of the Bible. It contains no law, no doctrine, and no national history of the Israelites.

Song of Solomon is classified among the poetry books of the Old Testament, but differs from the rest. The **book of Job** pulls back the veil on the spirit realm, revealing the true cause of Job's suffering. The book chronicles his struggle with faith under trial, teaching us that we should always trust the Lord and never lose heart. **The Psalms** are primarily a poetic record of David's experiences as he sought to serve the Lord. A good number of the psalms are prayers, often beginning in the misery of trial, and concluding in the victory of faith in God. **The Proverbs** are a collection of wise sayings, primarily from the pen of Solomon. It seems to have been compiled primarily for his son. **The book of Ecclesiastes**, also from Solomon's hand, tells of his search for meaning in life. Having tested many things under the sun, he came to the conclusion that our purpose is to fear God and keep His commandments. All of these other poetry books emphasize in some way or another man's relationship to God. Song of Solomon does not.

In the literal view, the Song of Solomon is simply a celebration of love between a man and a woman. It pictures the growth of a relationship from the exhilaration of infatuation, through the awkward insecurities and doubts of the courting or dating stage, into the bliss of the consummation of the marriage, and onward to increased intimacy and familiarity.

In a world where marital bliss seems more a fantasy than a reality, the Song of Solomon is a vibrant reminder of God's plan for the marriage relationship. Every married couple ought to have their own "Song of Solomon," not necessarily written, but certainly experienced. With so much turmoil in marriages today (and throughout the ages), it is easy to see the wisdom of God in providing this book.

*The Song of Solomon is simply a celebration of love between a man and a woman.*

## Allegorical Interpretations

A literal interpretation seems to best fit the book, but there are a couple other interpretative methods which are fairly popular. Jewish tradition views the Song as a depiction of God's love for Israel. After the establishment of the church, some commentators have seen the Song as a picture of Christ and His bride, the Church.

### GOD AND ISRAEL

The Rabbinical interpretation of the Song of Solomon extends beyond the book itself, going back to the exodus from Egypt (considered to be the time when God courted Israel), and the giving of the law at Mount Sinai (identified as the marriage contract). The Song of Solomon is contrasted with the book of Hosea, where the nation Israel is pictured as unfaithful to the Lord. In the Song, with just a few exceptions (the dreams), she is faithful to God, the beloved.

The Song of Solomon is recited in the synagogue on the Sabbath morning of the Passover, and among some, on the eve of the Sabbath also.

Consider a few examples of the Jewish interpretation of Song of Solomon:

### **FACT:**

*There was a debate among rabbis in the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD about whether the Song of Solomon should be part of the canon of Scripture.*

- 1:2 His kisses are the giving of the law at Sinai
- 1:5 Blackness reveals the awareness of sin
- 2:2 The lily among thorns is Israel among oppressive nations, yet still devoted to God

### CHRIST AND THE CHURCH

There are a host of commentators who believe the Song of Solomon is an allegory about Christ (the beloved) and the Church (the Shulamite), or some allow, on a more personal level, the individual believer. The earliest known commentator to affirm that the book is about the Christ and His Church was Hippolytus (170-236 AD).

Some songs which we sing find their origin in the Song of Solomon. Jesus is called the "Lily of the Valley" in the song by the same title. Song of Solomon 2:1 refers to the lily of the valley. Another song declares of Jesus, "His banner over me is love." In Song of Solomon 2:4, the Shulamite says of her beloved that His banner over her was love.

Consider a few examples of this interpretation:

- 1:4 The request to be drawn is linked by some to Jesus' words in John 6:44.
- 1:12 The church are invited into the company and at the table of the Christ.
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- 2:8 The beloved's voice coming upon the mountains is perceived by some to be the coming of Christ as a man upon the earth.
- 4:8 The call from Lebanon, from Amana, from Shenir and Hermon is seen as the Lord calling his people from all corners of the earth.

## Some Problems With An Allegoric Interpretations

An allegory searches for a hidden meaning in a text. If a text indicates to us that it contains allegory, that is fine, but to simply assume that it does is problematic. The text gives no direction for an allegorical interpretation; thus the interpreter's bias (Jew/Christian) will determine the direction of the interpretation.

There are sections of the text which simply do not lend themselves to an allegoric interpretation. If the purpose of the text is to discuss God's relationship to Israel, or Christ's relationship to the church, there is no need for the writer to use such explicit language. We have a detailed description of the Shulamite's body, including her breasts, lips, tongue, thighs and navel (Song 4:5, 11;

*The literal interpretation of the poem as simply a eulogy of married love had its representatives in early times, and, in the renaissance of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; but it is only in the last hundred years that this interpretation has practically ousted the allegorical. The Song is now taken, almost universally, to be the celebration of a marriage, there being, in fact, no hint of allegory in the text.*  
(JewishEncyclopedia.com)

*Many waters  
cannot quench love,  
nor can the floods  
drown it. If a man  
would give all the  
wealth of his house,  
it would be utterly  
despised.*  
(Song 8:7)

7:1-3). What possible significance can these images have in an interpretation which makes her the nation Israel or the church? Granted, in a parable, there are details which have no significance to the meaning of the parable, but it would seem awkward, perhaps even inappropriate to include such intimate details of a woman who is representative of the kingdom of God.

An allegoric interpretation of the Song of Solomon is intriguing. And, it is true that elsewhere in Bible, the concept of a bride and groom is used to speak of the Lord's relationship to His people. Though there may be statements in the text which could be applied to this relationship, it is unwise and unwarranted to force a figurative interpretation on the entire book. It is a love story, plain and simple. By inspiration, Solomon shared with us what was likely the happiest time of his life, his marriage to the Shulamite woman.