

# Song of Songs “A Love Song”

## I. Introduction to Song of Songs

- A. Song of Songs is the twenty-second book of the Old Testament Canon. It consists of 8 chapters and 117 verses. The name “Song of Songs” comes from Song of Songs 1:1, “The Song of Songs which is Solomon’s”. It is also commonly referred to as Song of Solomon, and Canticles which is Latin for “song”.
- B. Song of Songs claims to be written by Solomon. He is mentioned by name seven times and Jewish and Christian tradition accepts the book as from Solomon. Solomon ascended to the throne of Israel in 970 B.C. Song of Songs would be written sometime after that. The rabbis say that when Solomon was young, he wrote the Song of Songs. As an adult, he wrote Proverbs, and when he was old, he wrote Ecclesiastes.
- C. Song of Songs is an appropriate title. Literally, it is a Hebrew superlative declaring this to be the greatest of all songs. Solomon’s father, David, was famous for writing much of the Hebrew Hymn Book, Psalms. Solomon, himself, authored over one thousand songs by his own declaration and that of the Holy Spirit. This was the greatest of those songs. It is the greatest song, because it addresses the greatest theme – love. Not just any love, but the love of intimacy. What 1 Corinthians 13 is to the New Testament, Song of Songs is to the Old Testament.
- D. As we go, we will see that this song celebrates the mystery of human love, and illustrates the love relationship between God and man. Like Ephesians 5:22-23 (“Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body.”), Song of Songs seems to swing back and forth from describing the love affair of a young couple and the love of Christ for humanity.
- E. Some of the greatest illustrations of Christ found anywhere in the Old Testament, can be found in Song of Songs. Charles Spurgeon preached over one hundred sermons from this book. Rabbi Akiba, in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century, wrote, “. . . all the ages are not worthy of the day on which the Song of Songs was given to Israel; for all the Writings are holy, but the Song of Songs is the Holy of Holies.”

Despite all this, the New Testament contains no direct reference to Song of Songs. As a result, some have questioned its inspiration, value, and purpose in the Bible.

Four approaches have arisen in an attempt to understand Song of Songs:

### 1. Literal Approach

*Literal: It means what it says.*

There are those who see the story of Song of Songs as a love story between Solomon and a young woman. Others see the love between a shepherd and a young woman whom Solomon is trying to allure. (This seems to be a stretch). The book then becomes a guide for love, especially for marriage; heaven knows, we need that! The Greek playwright, Aeschylus (c 525-456 B.C.) is quoted as saying: “Marriage is like a three-ring circus: the engagement ring, the wedding ring and then suffering.” It is common to have a relationship that begins with love and ends, or becomes nothing more than two people sharing the same address.

Song of Solomon gives great insight into the love of intimacy. With this approach, many have been left to wonder if it deserves to be included as an inspired book of Scripture.

- a. The rabbinical school of Shammai (conservative) opposed the book.

## **Song of Songs** **“A Love Song”**

- b. The rabbinical school of Hillel (liberal) affirmed the book
- c. At the rabbinical councils of Jamnia (A.D. 90) the book was still being questioned as canonical.
- d. Under the leadership of Rabbi Akiba it was finally accepted as canonical.

For the Christian, the question has been answered since it was in the Bible Jesus used. That being said, many early Christian writers feared this book. Because of its somewhat graphic portrayal of love, the ancient Latin priest and theologian (c. 347 – 30 September 420 A.D.) Jerome once wrote a letter to his disciple, Paula, to give her a Bible reading plan for her daughter’s proper education. She should start with the Psalter, and then proceed to Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Job. The Gospels should come next, then Acts, and the Epistles. She should study the prophets, the Pentateuch and the Old Testament historical books. “When she has done all these she may safely read the Song of Songs but not before: for, were she to read it at the beginning, she would fail to perceive that, though it is written in fleshly words, it is a marriage song of a spiritual bride. And not understanding this she would suffer from it.”

### **2. Allegorical Approach**

*Allegory: a symbolic representation; nothing means what it says.*

Those holding this view suggest there was no love relationship between Solomon and the Shulamite woman, but the story is only symbolic of something else.

This interpretation is dangerous since nothing in the book suggests it should be understood this way, and with no point of reference, we can make the text say whatever we want it to. J.Sidlow Baxter states:

“To read some of the absurd and fanciful expositions associated with this theory, such as that the hair of the bride represents the mass of the nations converted to Christianity, is too much for a God-given sense of humour, and brings the whole theory into disrepute.”

### **3. Typical Approach**

*Typical: a person or thing believed to foreshadow another.*

The Jewish Rabbis saw it as a picture of God’s love for Israel. Naturally, the church sees it as Christ’s love for his church.

Since there are no direct references in the New Testament to the Song of Songs, some have a difficult time calling this book typical.

That leads us to a fourth possible approach and the one we will take.

### **4. Literal/Romantic Love**

I see the Song of Songs as a literal and Divine expression of romantic love between a man and a woman. It becomes the standard for intimacy. I also see it as an illustration of the love relationship between Christ and the Christian.

Jesus said the greatest command was to love God with all (Matthew 22:37). This statement was taken from Deuteronomy 6:5 where a love relationship with God was to be taught to every child.

- a. When Peter backslid, the only issue called into question was his love for Christ.
- b. Paul declared that it was love that motivated his Christian service.
- c. The Ephesian believers were rebuked for being busy, but neglecting love (Revelation 2:1-7).

## **Song of Songs** **“A Love Song”**

Within Song of Songs we will find beautiful, expressive and poetic illustrations of Christ’s love for the church. Our approach will be to peruse the text deriving application for the marriage relationship and our relationship with Christ.

### **II. Why Study Song of Songs**

- A. In love relationships we need all the help we can get. There is much we men can learn from Solomon’s expressions of love to his bride.  
However, quoting directly from the text, will not always convey the current meaning of your affection.  
For example Solomon compares his bride’s attributes to:  
Sgs 4:1-2      bird eyes, goat hair, sheep teeth  
Sgs 4:4        neck like a tower  
Sgs 7:2        navel a rounded goblet, waist is a heap of wheat  
Seriously, we need to communicate the love we have for each other clearly and consistently.
- B. Solomon goes to great length to express his love to this young woman.
1. Sgs 1:5-6 Shows that the young woman had a low self-worth brought on by how she had been treated by her family.
  2. Solomon sought to undo that by expressing his love for her by calling her:
    - a. Sgs 1:8 fairest among women
    - b. Sgs 1:15 my love
    - c. Sgs 5:2 my perfect one
    - d. Sgs 6:9 the favorite
  3. She calls him, beloved.
- C. We study the Song of Songs because in it we see Christ.  
Solomon’s love for the Shulamite clearly illustrated Christ’s love for us.

### **III. Outline of Song of Songs**

- Because this is a song and not a drama, it is difficult to outline. Instead of attempting to force an outline, on the text, we will simply highlight a few key verses.
- A. After a vivid description of romantic love, the Shulamite gives an important warning.  
Song of Songs 2:7 “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.”  
The warning is repeated in Song of Songs 3:5 and 8:4  
This kind of intimacy outside of marriage is not a beautiful act of love, it is selfish and destructive.
- B. My favorite statement is Song of Songs comes from 5:9 “[The 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?’”  
After hearing this young woman brag excessively about her man, her friends, the daughters of Jerusalem, are sick of hearing it. Their question, “What makes him so special?”  
Verses 10 – 16 are her very expressive answer.
- C. As a Christian we hear the same question and comments. “You are always reading your Bible, going to church, singing, praising, and talking about Jesus and your church. What is so special about Jesus?”

## **Song of Songs**

### **“A Love Song”**

- D. Our answer is found in Ephesians 1:3-6 “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.”