

OVERVIEW OF SONG OF SOLOMON (SONGS)

Author & Date: According to 1 Kings 4:32, Solomon wrote 1,005 songs. As claimed in verse 1 of the first chapter, Song of Solomon is one (or some say a collection of 5 or more) of these songs. The Hebrew name for the book is “Song of Songs” giving the idea that this is the greatest of the songs. Solomon probably wrote this in the middle of his reign (circa. 950 BC) since according to 1 Kings 11:3, Solomon had 700 wives and 300 concubines and in Song of Solomon he had 60 queens and 80 concubines.

Purpose: More than perhaps any other Book of Scripture, Song of Solomon has been subjected to numerous interpretations. Interestingly the book became part of the liturgy of Israel and was read on the eighth day of Passover.¹ The book depicts the beauty and passion of marital love and has a number of applications related to marriage and sexual relationships as God intended them to be. Furthermore, because of the descriptions throughout Scripture of Israel is pictured as a bride (e.g. Isa 62:5, Hos 2:19-20) and as an adulterous bride (e.g. Jer 13:27); likewise, the Church as the Bride of Christ (Eph 5:25-32) and by extension individual believers, so it seems the passion in this book is a picture of the passionate love that God has for His people and the passion we should have for God. J. Vernon McGee summarizes breadth of meaning in four areas:

1. The Glory of wedded love
2. The love of God for Israel
3. A Picture of Christ and the Church
4. The communion of Christ and the individual believer²

A key idea throughout the book is that of love. The Hebrew word "ahav" means "love," similar to the Greek "agape" (unconditional love as in God's love for us) and it is used 18 times. The word "dodem" is found 36 times and means love with a delight or more affection, akin to the Greek "phileo" (brotherly love). Together, they are found 54 times, averaging 6 times per chapter.³

Key/Noteworthy Passages:

- 2:4 He brought me to the banqueting house, And his banner over me *was* love.
- 2:16 My beloved *is* mine, and I *am* his. He feeds *his* flock among the lilies. (c.f. 6:3)
- 7:10 I *am* my beloved's, And his desire *is* toward me.
- 8:4 "I want you to swear, O daughters of Jerusalem, do not arouse or awaken love, until she pleases."
- 8:7 "Many waters cannot quench love, Nor will rivers overflow it; If a man were to give all the riches of his house for love, It would be utterly despised." (NASB)

Broad Outline for Song of Solomon

Outlining the book is so difficult that J. Vernon McGee makes no effort to do so, seeing the song as scenes in a drama that include many “flash backs”.⁴ As poetry, the book is difficult to outline and it is often difficult to tell who is speaking (compare chapter 1 NIV with NKJV). One way to view the song is to read it in light of the Jewish marriage process:

- A. The Announcement (getting to know one another)
- B. The Betrothal Period (the groom goes to prepare a place for the bride)
- C. The Wedding Celebration and Consummation (the groom returns)

- I. Introduction of the author (1:1)
- II. The Courtship (1:2-3:5)
 - A. Expressions of Love
 - B. Longing for His return (3:1-5)

¹ Kinlaw, Dennis F. "Song of Songs." *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Volume 5. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1991, p.1200

² McGee, J. Veronon, "The Song of Solomon" *Thru the Bible*, Volume III, Nashville, Thomas Nelson 1982, p. 143.

³ Binder, Tim www.TruthSaves.org Outline for Song of Solomon. (Tim Binder is a personal friend of Pastor John).

⁴ McGee, p. 144.

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- III. The Beloved Returns 3:6-5:1
 - A. The Beloved comes as the King (3:6-11)
 - B. The King's passion for her (3:12-4:15)
 - C. Mutual Union (4:16-5:1)
- IV. Reflections (5:2-8:4)
 - A. The Shulamite's Questioning longing (5:2-6:3)
 - B. Solomon's Desire for her (6:4-7:9a)
 - C. Confidence in the Relationship (7:9b-8:4)
- V. Conclusion
 - A. The permanence of Love (8:5-7)
 - B. Reflections of the Shulamite's Progress (8:8-14)

Food for Thought

1. What are your initial impressions of the Song of Solomon?
2. Throughout the book, the presence of expensive perfumes is mentioned on several occasions and specifically myrrh (1:13, 3:6, 4:6, 4:14, 5:1, 5:5, and 5:13). Myrrh was a component of the priestly anointing oil (Ex. 30:23), perfuming (Est. 2:12, Prov 7:17), was a gift given to Jesus near his birth (Matt 2:11), was included in the drink offered Jesus at his death (Mar 15:23), and was used in his burial (John 19:39). Without becoming too symbolic in the interpretation (given the wide use of myrrh), what does the presence of this spice tend to do throughout the song?
3. Although the images used in passages such as 4:1-15 might not win the heart of a woman in our current culture, what does the use of such descriptive language suggest about the passion of the marriage relationship? How about the relationship between believer's and the Lord?
4. Consider 5:2-8. Describe the Shulamite's actions in your own words. How does that reflect the love of a marriage relationship?
5. In 6:1, the "daughter's of Jerusalem" ask the Shulamite about where her beloved is. How would you describe her response in 6:2-3? In light of this conversation, how does the beloved's praise of his bride starting in 6:4 fit within the context?
6. What significant application can you draw from 8:4 as it relates to marriage?
7. What does the permanence of love described in 8:5-8 instruct those in a marriage relationship and for our relationship with the Lord?
8. When taken as a whole, what picture does this book produce of married love? How does that picture transfer to our relationship with Christ?
9. Consider McGee's statement, "I know of no book that will draw you closer to Him or be more personal than the Song of Solomon."⁵

⁵ McGee, p. 143.