

# Song of Solomon 1 Commentary

PREVIOUS

NEXT

## SONG OF SOLOMON COMMENTARY NOTES

This is a work in progress - please use "as is"  
or as they say in business "Caveat Emptor"!

### SONG OF SOLOMON

Union and Communion

<b>The Courtship</b> (Falling in Love) Song 1:2-3:5	<b>The Wedding</b> (United in Love) Song 3:6-5:1	<b>The Maturing Marriage</b> (Struggling and Growing in Love) Song 5:2-8:14	
<b>Fostering of Love</b>	<b>Fulfillment of Love</b>	<b>Frustration of Love</b>	<b>Faithfulness of Love</b>
<b>Falling in Love</b>	<b>United in Love</b>	<b>Divided in Love</b>	<b>Devoted in Love</b>
<b>Cultivating Love</b>		<b>Acclaiming Love</b>	
Courtship Before the Marriage	Procession for and Consummation of the Marriage	The Honeymoon is Over! Song 5:2-6:13	The Marriage Deepens Love Matures Song 7:1-8:14
Chief Speaker: The Bride ("Darling")	Chief Speaker: The Groom ("Beloved")	Chief Speaker: Both	Chief Speaker: "Duet"
Theme - The joy and intimacy of love within a committed marriage covenant.			
Song of Solomon foreshadows Christ, the Bridegroom's relationship with His Bride, the Church. (Eph 5:32-note, Rev 19:7-8-note)			
<b>Date</b> - Circa 950-965BC Time Period estimated at about 1 year Before Solomon plunged into gross immorality and idolatry (Compare only 140 women in Song 6:8-note with 1Ki 11:1-4, 5-7, 8, 9-10)			
Adapted from Charles Swindoll's book chart			

## Introduction: Song of Solomon

- Song of Songs - Introduction
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These commentary notes are **not** intended to be in depth or as exhaustive as most of the **verse by verse** notes on this website ([see available verse by verse commentaries](#)). The intent instead is to give an overview because there are probably **more unusual interpretations of the Song of Solomon than for any other book in the Bible**, and it would be easy for a sincere student of the Word to totally avoid this book out of frustration, as so often occurs when studying the book of the Revelation (the veritable plethora of prophetic commentaries overwhelming many to exclaim "No one can understand the Revelation!" I beg to strongly disagree, but see Revelation commentaries for more discussion).

As discussed below, the reader should be aware that the interpretative approach adopted in these notes is to take the text in its literal, natural, normal meaning and not to seek hidden, "spiritual" or mystical meanings. Such a literal approach does not mean that there are not many practical applications, but only that such applications be based upon an accurate interpretation, lest one suffers the consequences inherent in misapplication of the Word of Truth.

In addition to the brief explanatory comments, the notes include the devotional and applicational comments from [Today in the Word's](#) month long series on the **Song of Solomon** (June, 2004).

It has been said that "Nowhere in Scripture does the unspiritual mind tread upon ground so mysterious and incomprehensible as in this book, while the saintliest men and women of the ages have found it a source of pure and exquisite delight." (Quoted by J. Sidlow Baxter. Explore the Book)

**Baxter** goes on to add "There is no book of Scripture on which more commentaries have been written and more diversities of opinion expressed than this short poem of eight chapters" (**Ed**: I think the Revelation of Jesus Christ is close!) - so says a learned expositor. We shall be wise, therefore, to avoid adding unprofitably to an already liberally discussed subject. Fortunately, in the process of the long-continued discussion certain broad facts have gradually emerged with increasing clearness, all converging toward the same result; so that we are now in a position to sum up and draw fairly mature conclusions."

**Irving Jensen** offers an interesting introduction noting that...

A healthy balance in Bible study is maintained when the Song of Solomon is studied along with Ecclesiastes. Ecclesiastes focuses on the intellect of man -- his mental outlook on life. The Song of Solomon is a book about the emotions of man -- in particular the emotion of love.

It is a recognized fact that man's total experience is directed by these three responses: intellect, emotions and will. Actually, all three responses are involved in a full experience of genuine love, just as this is true of genuine faith. To say that the Song of Solomon is a book about the emotion of life is not to rule out intellect and will. (E.g., a person in love exercises his will in choosing whom to love.) It is just that the emotion aspect is prominent in the story.

But the Song of Solomon is more than a human love story. It is a picture of the love between the Lord God and His people. If your study of the Song of Solomon will arouse in you a more genuine love for your Lord, as well as a deeper gratitude for His love to you, then it will not surprise you that God chose to include such a love story in His Holy Scriptures. (Jensen's Survey of the Old Testament. Moody Press. 1978)

## Interpretative Approach Song of Solomon

Song of Solomon is one of the most controversial and difficult books in the Bible to interpret, with a wide range of approaches summarized in the following synopsis (very brief - see introduction in the commentary by Keil and Delitzsch for elaboration although they interpret the Song as a play or drama, not as a literal discourse. As an aside Delitzsch wrote that "*The Song is the most obscure book in the Old Testament*").

**G. Lloyd Carr** observed that "Among the books of the Bible, the Song of Solomon is one of the smallest, most difficult, yet one of the most popular with both Jews and Christians. Over the centuries hundreds of books and commentaries have been written and unnumbered sermons preached on these 117 verses" (The Song of Solomon)

The commentator Pope writes that no other composition of comparable size in world literature "has provoked or inspired such a volume and variety of comment and interpretation."

**Recommended Resource** concerning introductory comments on the Song of Solomon - Although an Mp3, Messianic Jewish pastor **Steve Kreloff** gives an excellent, well reasoned introduction to this somewhat controversial and too often misinterpreted book - Invest 46' to listen to **Kreloff's [Introduction to the Song of Solomon](#)**. He For example Pastor Kreloff has this to say about the Song of Solomon - "it's contents have **the potential to profoundly affect your life**, especially if you are married, because this is the only book in the entire Bible that is totally devoted to the subject of physical intimacy between a husband and a wife." (**Recommended**)

**G. Campbell Morgan** offers a balanced view - "The song should be treated first as a simple and yet sublime song of human affection. When it is thus understood, reverently the thoughts may be lifted into higher values of setting forth the joys of communion between the spirit of man and the Spirit of God, and ultimately between the church and Christ. Therefore, I can sing the Song of Solomon as setting forth the relationship between Christ and His bride."

**Ryrie** - Interpretations (1) Some regard the book purely as an allegory, i.e., fictional characters are employed to teach the truth of God's love for His people. Such a non-historical view, however, is contrary to all principles of normal interpretation and must be rejected. (2) Others rightly understand the book to be an historical record of the romance of Solomon with a Shulammitite woman. The "snapshots" in the book portray the joys of love in courtship and marriage and counteract both the extremes of asceticism and of lust. The rightful place of physical love, within marriage only, is clearly established and honored. Within the historical framework, some also see illustrations of the love of God (and Christ) for His people. Obviously Solomon does not furnish the best example of marital devotion, for he had many wives and concubines (140 at this time, Song 6:8; many more later, 1Kings 11:3). The experiences recorded in this book may reflect the only (or virtually the only) pure romance he had. (Ryrie Study Bible)

**J Paul Tanner** - Probably no other book in all the Bible has given rise to such a plethora of interpretations as the Song of Songs. Saadia, a medieval Jewish commentator said the Song of Songs is like a book for which the key has been lost. Over one hundred years ago, the noted Old Testament scholar Franz Delitzsch remarked, "*The Song is the most obscure book of the Old Testament. Whatever principle of interpretation one may adopt, there always remains a number of inexplicable passages, and just such as, if we understood them, would help to solve the mystery. And yet the interpretation of a book presupposes from the beginning that the interpreter has mastered the idea of the whole. It has thus become an ungrateful task; for however successful the interpreter may be in the separate parts, yet he will be thanked for his work only when the conception as a whole which he has decided upon is approved of.*" Delitzsch correctly pointed out that the challenge lies in conceptualizing the idea of the whole, and yet it is precisely the unique features of this book that make this such a formidable task. More recently Harrison addressed this very issue. "*Few books of the Old Testament have experienced as wide a variety of interpretations as the Song of Songs. The absence of specifically religious themes has combined with the erotic lyrics and the vagueness of any plot for the work to furnish for scholars an almost limitless ground for speculation.*" Understandably these problems led to the allegorical treatment of the book by Jewish as well as Christian scholars. This particular method, which held sway up through the nineteenth century, is now losing its following. Yet despite the multitude of alternative suggestions, no other interpretive scheme has gained a consensus among Old Testament exegetes....The goal of this article is to survey the primary interpretive schemes that have been set forth throughout the book's history and to evaluate the hermeneutical foundations on which they rest.[4] (**[The History of Interpretation of the Song of Songs by J. Paul Tanner](#)** - 23 page article that gives an excellent summary - **Recommended**)

Here are the major interpretative approaches to the Song of Solomon...

**(1) Allegorical:** Sadly, the majority of interpreters (who seem to not want to believe that God could actually speak on the subject of intimacy between a husband and wife) favor the Song as an allegory which conveys hidden, mystical and/or "spiritual" meanings. Jewish interpreters favored this approach picturing Yahweh as the lover and the woman as Israel.

The NT church (early church fathers, later commentators including the reformers, and many modern scholars) see the lover as the Bridegroom Christ and the woman as His bride, the Church, some to the point of absurdity.

A major problem with the allegorical approach is that it normally ignores the intended meaning of the text and degenerates into **eisegesis** (reading into the text whatever the reader wishes).

For example, the Early Church Father Origen wrote 12 volumes allegorically explaining the Song! Bernhard of Clairvaux was not much better, actually dying (1153AD) after he had delivered 86 sermons and only reaching the end of Chapter 2! Clairvaux's disciple Gilbert Porretanus carried forward the allegorical absurdity for 48 sermons only to reach Chapter 5:10 before he died! The most serious flaw of the allegorical approach in interpretation of the Song of Solomon (or other Biblical books, this caution applying especially to commentaries on the Revelation! See related discussion of the interpretative approaches to the Revelation; see also [the rise of allegorical interpretation](#)) is that this approach is predominantly subjective with no way to verify or discount the commentator's interpretation.

See also a historical summary of Bible interpretation by **Dr Robert Lewis** in his course on hermeneutics ([Hermeneutics - Study of Interpretation of Scriptures - especially the overview of the history of Bible interpretation - beginning on page 22](#)). (See also **Dr Anthony Garland's** discussion on [Interpreting Symbols](#) which includes an interesting section entitled [The Rise of Allegorical Interpretation](#))

As **Roy Zuck** explains that "**Allegorizing** is searching for a hidden or secret meaning underlying but remote from and unrelated in reality to the more obvious meaning of a text. In other words **the literal reading is a sort of code** (Ed note: Does this sound familiar? cp [The Bible Code](#), which preceptaustin.org thoroughly rejects as unfounded, without merit and very misleading!), which needs to be deciphered to determine the more significant and hidden meaning. In this approach the literal is superficial, the allegorical is the true meaning." ([Roy B. Zuck, Basic Bible Interpretation Colorado Springs, CO: Cook Communications, 1991](#)) (Bolding added)

**Criswell** rightly comments that the **allegorical** "approach often finds as many interpretations as interpreters, which shows its dubious value. Genuine allegory will usually yield basically the same interpretation to its varied interpreters (Ed comment: As a corollary thought, keep in mind that even figurative language always has a literal meaning, but as with all Scripture may have multiple valid applications)." ([Criswell, W. A. Believer's Study Bible: New King James Version, 1991. Thomas Nelson](#))

**Bernard Ramm** - Allegorical interpretation is the interpretation of a document whereby something foreign, peculiar, or hidden is introduced into the meaning of the text giving it a proposed (Ed: "supposed") deeper or real meaning. Geffcken notes that in allegorical interpretation "an entirely foreign **subjective** (Ed: Contrast "**objective**") meaning is read into the passage to be explained," and Hoskyns and Davey note that the "allegory expresses the relationship between certain persons and things by substituting a whole range of persons or things from an entirely different sphere of experience." (Protestant Biblical Interpretation)

In English **Subjective** is the opposite of **objective**, the latter referring to things that are more clear-cut. Objective means not influenced by personal feelings or opinions in considering and representing facts (ponder that as you think about the variety of personalities that have sought to interpret the Bible allegorically). That Earth has one moon is objective — it's a fact. Whether the moon is pretty or not is subjective — not everyone will agree. Facts are objective, but opinions are subjective. It follows that allegorical interpretation borders on "opinion" as opposed to fact. Subjective describes something existing in the mind; belonging to the thinking subject rather than to the object of thought (Apply this to the Scriptures which are to the object of our thoughts!). So even these simple definitions of subjective, which is a foundation premise of allegorical interpretation, emphasize the inherent "danger" of such a style of interpretation! Webster adds that allegorical means "having hidden spiritual meaning that transcends the literal sense of a sacred text." Even this definition is contra the essential nature of the Scriptures, which are

not to cloak God in hidden meanings but to reveal God in clear prose and poetry (cf 2Ti 3:16-note) **Caveat emptor** should be the watchword for all who seek to walk the treacherous path of allegorical interpretation!

**Warren Wiersbe** comments that...

While the Song of Solomon illustrates the deepening love we can have with Christ, we **must be careful not** to turn the story into an **allegory** and make everything mean something.

**All things are possible to those who allegorize—  
and what they come up with is usually heretical.**

It's almost laughable to read some of the ancient commentaries (and their modern imitators) and see how interpreters have made Solomon say what they want him to say. The language of love is imaginative and piles one image on top of another to convey its message. But to make the bride's breasts represent the two ordinances, or the garden stand for the local church, or the voice of the turtledove mean the Holy Spirit speaking, is to obscure if not destroy the message of the book. Other texts in the Bible may support the ideas expressed by these fanciful interpreters, but their ideas didn't come from what Solomon wrote. (Bible Exposition Commentary - Old Testament) (Bolding added)

**(2) Typological** (See discussion of Study of Biblical types): This approach admits to the the historical reality of the Song but goes on to envision Solomon as **typifying** Christ and the Shulammitte woman as a **type** of the church, thus picturing Christ's the Bridegroom's love for His Bride, the Church. You may be thinking that this sounds like an **allegorical approach**, but it differs in interpreting Solomon as a literal, historical person and by not seeking "hidden" or mystical meanings as in the allegorical approach. Scripture does in fact sanction the use of types, Adam for example being "a type of Him Who was to come" (see **note** Romans 5:14), but the Song of Solomon contains no verses that can be interpreted as indicating the various aspects of Solomon's life are divinely intended to represent a type of Christ. Therefore this interpretative approach is to be as assiduously avoided as the allegorical approach.

In summary, both of the previous interpretative approaches (1 & 2) invoke the **church** as vital to their respective interpretative schemes (allegorical or typological), but the careful student of Scripture will note that neither approach can be the primary interpretation since the **doctrine of the church** was a mystery, a truth previously hidden in the Old Testament and only revealed in the New Testament. Paul wrote that...

by referring to this (the mystery), when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, 5 which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit...and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery (of the church) which for ages has been hidden in God, Who created all things (See **notes** Ephesians 3:4; 3:5; 3:9)

**(3) Literal, Historical and Grammatical:** (discussion of literal approach) This approach is the only **objective** mode of interpretation, and seeks to attach the normal meaning to the words thus taking them at "face value".

The earliest of the so called **Early Church Fathers** interpreted Scripture literally for the most part. Regarding the meaning of literal interpretation, **Peter Lange** writes...

**Literal** is not opposed to **spiritual** but to **figurative**; spiritual is an antithesis on the one hand to material, and on the other to carnal (in a bad sense). The Literalist is not one who denies that figurative language, that symbols are used in prophecy, nor does he deny that great spiritual truths are set forth therein; his position is simply, that the prophecies (**Ed note:** and the Song of Solomon) are to be normally interpreted (i.e., according to the received laws of language) as any other utterances are interpreted—that which is manifestly literal being regarded as literal, and that which is manifestly figuratively being so regarded. The position of the Spiritualist (**Ed note:** AKA "allegorist") is not that which is properly indicated by the term. He is one who holds that certain portions are to be normally interpreted, other portions are to be regarded as having a mystical sense. The terms

properly expressive of the schools are normal and mystical. (John Peter Lange, A Commentary on the Holy Scripture: Revelation, p. 98)

**Sidlow Baxter** observes that those who take the **literal approach**...

rightly understand the book to be an historical record of the romance of Solomon with a Shulamite woman. The "snapshots" in the book portray the joys of love in courtship and marriage and counteract both the extremes of asceticism and of lust. The rightful place of physical love, within marriage only, is clearly established and honored. Within the historical framework, some also see illustrations of the love of God (and Christ) for His people. Obviously Solomon does not furnish the best example of marital devotion, for he had many wives and concubines (140 at this time, Song 6:8; many more later, 1 Kings 11:3). The experiences recorded in this book may reflect the only (or virtually the only) pure romance he had. (J. Sidlow Baxter. Explore the Book)

**Criswell** notes that some who take the **literal approach** go a bit too far and...

maintain that the poem is therefore merely a secular love song expressing human romantic love at its best without spiritual lesson or theological content. They value the Song only as a divine sanction upon marital love and a timely warning against perversions of marriage popular in Solomon's time. However, there is also the option that the poem is a vital expression in frank but pure language of the divine theology of marriage as expressed in the love between husband and wife in the physical area, setting forth the ideal love relationship in monogamous marriage. Even the most intimate and personal human love is according to divine plan and as such is bestowed by God Himself (cf. Ge 2:18-25; Mt 19:4-6). The richest and best of human love is only a foretaste of the matchless, greater love of God. In this book, the scarlet thread of redemption is revealed, as man, through seeing and experiencing the purity and holiness of earthly love in marriage, gains a better and clearer understanding of the eternal, heavenly love of Christ for His church. ([Ibid](#))

**Morris** makes an interesting comment noting that "Although there have been a number of interpretations of this book, the most obvious interpretation is no interpretation at all. That is, it is simply what it purports to be--a romantic love poem describing the love of young Solomon and a Shulamite maiden who became his first bride. There is nothing unseemly, of course, about a book of the Bible depicting the beauties of pure courtship and marital love. The union of male and female in holy matrimony is intrinsic to the creation itself (Genesis 2:24-25). In this sense, the narrative of the Song can be considered as an idyllic picture of courtship and marriage that might apply, with varying details, to all true love and marriage as ordained by God. ([Morris, Henry: Defenders Study Bible Online](#))

Clearly Morris' "non-interpretation" approach is a plea for us to interpret this beautiful love poem in its natural, literal sense.

The highly respected evangelical theologian **Roy Zuck** notes that "Some Bible teachers view the Song of Songs as an extended allegory to depict God's relationship to Israel or Christ's relationship to the church. However, since there is no indication in the book that this is the case, it is preferable to view the book as extolling human love and marriage.—Basic Bible Interpretation ([Roy B. Zuck, Basic Bible Interpretation \(Colorado Springs, CO: Cook Communications, 1991\)](#)) (Bolding added)

**Jensen** adds that "The literal purpose of the book has often been twisted by those not prepared to read frank and intimate expressions of love. Asceticism and lust--two perversions of the holiness of marriage-- are slain by the message of this book. If the reader is licentiously excited when he reads the Song of Solomon, he is out of tune with its purpose. The book's literal message is perverted only by those who do not see the purity and true beauty of all of God's creative acts." (Ibid)

**Wilkinson** and **Boa** in discussing the theme and purpose write that "The purpose of this book depends on the viewpoint taken as to its primary thrust. Is it fictional, allegorical, or historical? **(1) Fictional:** Some hold that this song is a fictional drama that portrays Solomon's courtship of and marriage to a poor but beautiful girl from the country. But the book gives every indication that the story really happened. **(2) Allegorical:** In this view, the

primary purpose of the Song was to illustrate the truth of God's love for His people whether the events were fictional or not. Some commentators insist that the book is indeed historical but its primary purpose is typical, that is, to present Yahweh's love for His bride Israel and/or Christ's love for His Church. But this interpretation is subjective and lacking in evidence. There are other places in Scripture where the husband/wife relationship is used symbolically (cf. Ezek. 16; 23; Hos. 1–3), but these are always indicated as symbols. This may be an application of the book but it should not be the primary interpretation. **(3) Historical;** The Song of Songs is a poetic record of Solomon's actual romance with a Shulamite woman. The various scenes in the book exalt the joys of love in courtship and marriage and teach that physical beauty and sexuality in marriage should not be despised as base or unspiritual. It offers a proper perspective of human love and avoids the extremes of lust and asceticism. **Only when sexuality was viewed in the wrong way as something akin to evil was an attempt made to allegorize the book.** But this is part of God's creation with its related desires and pleasures, and it is reasonable that He would provide us with a guide to a pure sexual relationship between a husband and wife. In fact, the union of the two sexes was originally intended to illustrate the oneness of the Godhead (see Gen. 1:27; 2:24; 1 Cor. 6:16–20). Thus, the Song is a bold and positive endorsement by God of marital love in all its physical and emotional beauty. This interpretation does not mean that the book has no spiritual illustrations and applications. It certainly illustrates God's love for His covenant people Israel, and anticipates Christ's love for His bride, the church. (Bolding added) ([Talk Thru the Bible- Bruce Wilkinson, Kenneth D. Boa](#))

**Farrar** summarizes such a long list (some 19 different ideas - see list below) of interpretations of the Song of Solomon one wonders how anyone could hope to glean any divine truth from the text. Farrar laments...

Can anything be more grotesque and more melancholy than the vast mass of hypotheses about the latter (the Song of Solomon)—**hypotheses which can make anything of anything?** Like Esther (Song of Solomon) never mentions the name of God and it narrowly escaped exclusion from the canon (The Jews forbade any one to read it before the age of thirty, and anathematized its literal interpretation. Sanhedrin, iii. 1. and Sanhedrin, f. 101, i. ... "*Whoever recites a verse of the Song of Solomon as a secular song ... causes evil to come upon the world.*").

It represents, say the Commentators,

- (1) the love of the Lord for the congregation of Israel (Targum)
- (2) it relates the history of the Jews from the Exodus to the Messiah (R. Saadia Gaon)
- (3) it is a consolation to afflicted Israel (Rashi)
- (4) it is an occult history (Ibn Ezra)
- (5) it represents the union of the divine soul with the earthly body (Joseph Ibn Caspe)
- (6) or of the material with the active intellect (Ibn Tibbon)
- (7) it is the conversation of Solomon and Wisdom (Abravanel)
- (8) it describes the love of Christ to His Church (Origen, and the mass of Christian expositors, except Theodore of Mopsuestia [**Ed note:** he has been called "the prince of ancient exegetes"], the school of Antioch [**Ed note:** AKA, "The Antiochene Fathers" who otherwise generally emphasized a return to historical/literal interpretation], and most modern scholars [**Ed note:** This was published in 1886])
- (9) it is historico-prophetical (Nicolas of Lyra)
- (10) it is Solomon's thanksgiving for a happy reign (Luther, Brenz)
- (11) it is a love-song unworthy of any place in the sacred canon (Castellio, Dr Noyes)
- (12) it treats of man's reconciliation to God (Ainsworth)
- (13) it is a prophecy of the Church from the Crucifixion till after the Reformation (Cocceius)

- (14) it is an anticipation of the Apocalypse (Hennischius)
- (15) it is the seven days epithalamium on the marriage of Solomon with the daughter of Pharaoh (Bossuet)
- (16) it is a magazine for direction and consolation under every condition (Durham)
- (17) it treats in hieroglyphics of the sepulchre of the Saviour, His death, and the Old Testament saints (Puffendorf)
- (18) it refers to Hezekiah and the ten tribes (Hug)
- (19) it is written in glorification of the Virgin Mary. (Many Roman Catholic commentators)

Such were the impossible and divergent interpretations of what many regarded as the very Word of God! A few only till the beginning of this century saw the clear truth—which is so obvious to all who go to the Bible with the humble desire to read what it says and not to import into it their own baseless fancies—that it is the exquisite celebration of a pure love in humble life; of a love which no splendor can dazzle and no flattery seduce. (**Farrar, F. W. History of Interpretation: 1886**)

**Osborne** in his work [The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation](#) quotes from Childs who notes five different ways the Song of Solomon has been interpreted throughout history...

- (1) Judaism and the early church** (as well as Watchman Nee, among others, in modern times) allegorized it as picturing the mystical love of God or Christ for his people.
- (2) Some modern scholars** have seen it as a postexilic midrash on divine love (similar to the first option).
- (3) A common view sees it as drama**, either of a maiden with her lover (the traditional view) or with three characters (as the king seeks to entice the maiden away from her lover).
- (4)** Most modern critics see no structural development but believe it is a collection of secular love songs, perhaps modeled on praise hymns.
- (5)** A few believe the book uses love imagery for purposes of cultic ritual and was used in the festivals of Israel.

Of these the third and fourth have the greatest likelihood; my personal preference is to see it as a lyric poem describing the love relationship between the beautiful maiden and her lover, described both as a rustic shepherd and as a king... The poem has only a slight plot structure, and the love relationship is as strong at the beginning as at the end. Therefore whichever of the three major views we take, it is preeminently a love song and would be excellent in a marriage seminar.

**Tremper Longman** writes that...

The Song of Songs, then, describes a **lover** and **his beloved** rejoicing in each other's sexuality in a garden. They feel no shame. The Song is as the story of **sexuality redeemed**.

Nonetheless, this reading does not exhaust the theological meaning of the Song. When read in the context of the canon as a whole, the book forcefully communicates the intensely intimate relationship that Israel enjoys with God. In many Old Testament Scriptures, marriage is an underlying metaphor for Israel's relationship with God. Unfortunately, due to Israel's lack of trust, the metaphor often appears in a negative context, and Israel is pictured as a whore in its relationship with God (Jer 2:2; 3:14; Jer 31:32 Is 54:5, Hos 2:19). One of the most memorable scenes in the Old Testament is when God commands his prophet Hosea to marry a prostitute to symbolize his love for a faithless Israel. In spite of the predominantly negative use of the image, **we must not lose sight of the fact that Israel was the bride of God, and so as the Song celebrates the intimacy between human lovers, we learn about our relationship with God.**

So we come full circle, reaching similar conclusions to the early allegorical approaches to



the Song. The difference, though, is obvious. We do not deny the primary and natural reading of the book, which highlights **human love**, and we do not arbitrarily posit the analogy between the Song's lovers and God and Israel. Rather, we read it in the light of the pervasive marriage metaphor of the Old Testament.

**From a New Testament Perspective.** The New Testament also uses human relationships as metaphors of the divine-human relationship, and none clearer than marriage. According to Ephesians 5:22-23, the church is the bride of Christ (see also Re 19:7; Re 21:2, 9; Re 22:17). So Christians should read the Song in the light of Ephesians and rejoice in the intimate relationship that they enjoy with Jesus Christ. ([Song of Solomon, Theology of - Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology](#))

Michael Rydelnik and Tim M. Sigler have an excellent summary on the Interpretation of Song of Solomon:

Scholars and theologians have offered numerous suggestions to understand the challenging poetic message of the Song. Their presuppositions determine how the book is understood.

**First**, allegory has historically been the most common approach to the Song. Jewish tradition sees it as a story of God's love for Israel. Christian tradition has seen it as Christ's love for the Church. Although love is a key element in the Song, forcing an allegory strains the message of the text and imposes arbitrary meanings. Therefore, allegory has generally been rejected by modern scholarship as a valid approach to the Song.

**Second**, it is common to interpret the Song as a drama. As a drama, Solomon and the Shulammitte (see comments at 6:13 for this name) have the main roles with a chorus as minor speakers. The lack of plotline in the Song and the subjective imposition of scenes make a dramatic reading forced. Most importantly, full-fledged dramatic literature of this type was not known among the ancient Israelites.

**Third**, some critical scholars see the Song as a sacred marriage story drawn from ancient pagan Near Eastern fertility cults. However, annual fertility rituals are absent from the Song. Furthermore, it is doubtful that the sacred monotheistic Scriptures would borrow from pagan fertility rituals.

**Fourth**, a common current interpretation of the genre of the Song is that it is an anthology of love poems. The Hebrew title of the book provides readers with a literary clue to the book's genre—and therefore its interpretation. Shir Hashirim (the Song of Songs) is a collection of love poems or a song composed of many songs—thus a "song of songs." Those who differ with this interpretation argue it fails to see the intrinsic unity in the Song as well as the intertextual links within it.

**Fifth**, recently it has been again suggested that the Song should be read as a messianic document. John Sailhamer and James Hamilton have both argued that the Song was written from a messianic perspective in order to nourish a messianic hope.

Sailhamer views the Song as an allegory not of Messiah's love for the Church, but for His love for divine wisdom. He cites "Beneath the apple tree I awakened you..."(8:5b) as an intertextual reference to the prologue of the book of Proverbs and the fall in Gen 3 (J. H. Sailhamer, NIV Compact Bible Commentary [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994], 359-60). In his view the beloved is understood as "wisdom" and Solomon represents the promised seed of Gen 3:15.

Hamilton proposes a more likely messianic view. He posits a nonallegorical but symbolic interpretation, with King Solomon, as the son of David, representing "the ultimate expression of David's royal seed... the Davidic king, with all the messianic connotations that status carries" (Hamilton Jeremiah., "The Messianic Music of the Song of Songs," 331). Hamilton sees the theme of the Song as the "recovery of intimacy after alienation, which appears to match the hope engendered by Gn 3:15 for a seed for the woman who would come as the royal Messiah to restore the gladness of Eden" (339-40).

After demonstrating the development of this theme of recovered intimacy through the Song, Hamilton points out that "I am my beloved's, And his desire is for me" (Sg 7:10) functions as the climax to the Song, using the same word for "desire" as in Gn 3:16. This word (Hb. *tesuqah*) is used only three times in the Hebrew Bible (Gn 3:16; 4:7; Sg 7:10). The first two uses refer to the alienation of the fall. Thus the Song appears to be making a direct allusion to the alienation found in the curse of Gn 3:16, suggesting that the messianic king will ultimately reverse the curse on the woman.

These views notwithstanding, it remains best to understand the Song as primarily a poetic presentation of a

biblical view of ideal love and marriage. This is not to treat the book as a sex manual, but rather as divine guidance for the most sacred earthly relationship created by God. It treats marital love as a spiritual creation. Roland Murphy correctly concludes that "the eventual canonization of the work... can best be explained if the poetry originated as religious rather than secular literature" (Roland E. Murphy, A Commentary on the Book of Canticles or the Song of Songs, Hermenia—A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible [Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1990], 94-95). Love and marriage are divinely ordained and not mere cultural mores. (Moody Bible Commentary - recommended, conservative resource that approaches interpretation of Scripture literally - [Logos](#))

## The Speakers

### Song of Solomon

The Song of Solomon is a **dialogue** which includes 5 different sets of speakers...

**(1) The Shulammitte woman** (Song 1:2-4a, 1:4c-7, 1:12-14, 1:16-2:1, 2:3-13, 2:15-3:11, 4:16, 5:2-8, 5:10-16, 6:2-3, 6:11-12, 7:9b-8:4, 8:5b-7, 8:10-12, 8:14),

**(2) Friends of the Shulammitte** (Daughters of Jerusalem) (Song 1:4b, 1:8, 1:11, 5:9, 6:1, 6:10, 6:13a, 8:5a)

**(3) King Solomon** (Song 1:9-10, 1:15, 2:2, 2:14, 4:1-15, 5:1, 6:4-9, 6:13b-7:9a, 8:13),

**(4) God** (Song 5:1e "Eat friends, drink and imbibe deeply O lovers")

**(5) Shulammitte's brothers** (Song 8:8-9)

Solomon's abrupt change of speakers and settings can make the dialogue and plot difficult to follow. For this reason the Biblical text is supplemented with **bold green** annotations in an attempt to identify the specific speaker(s).

## The Timing

### Song of Solomon

**John MacArthur** has an interesting note regarding the time span of this story explaining that...

The first spring appears in Song 2:11-13 and the second in Song 7:12. Assuming a chronology without gaps, the Song of Solomon took place over a period of time at least one year in length, but probably no longer than two years. ([MacArthur, J.: The MacArthur Study Bible Nashville: Word](#))

**Thomas Constable** has a helpful note regarding when in Solomon's life this book was likely written, as he answers the relevant question...

How could Solomon, who had 700 wives and 300 concubines (1 Kings 11:3, read the tragic story in 1Kings 11:1-8), be the same faithful lover this book presents? He could be if he became polygamous after the events in this book took place. That seems a more likely explanation than that he was polygamous when these events occurred but just omitted reference to his other loves. Probably he wrote the book before he became polygamous. We do not know how old Solomon was when he married the second time. The history recorded in Kings and Chronicles is not in strict chronological order. The Shulammitte was probably not Pharaoh's daughter (1 Kings 3:1; cf. Song of Sol. 4:8). ([Expository Notes](#))

## An Outline:

### Song of Solomon

(See Swindoll's [Book Chart](#))

**Song 1:1** - Title and authorship

**Song 1:2-3:5** - Courtship: Sexual desire expressed but restrained (Anticipation)

**Song 3:6-11** - Procession for the Marriage

**Song 4:1-5:1** - Marriage consummated: Sexual desires not restrained (Consummation)

**Song 5:2-8:4** - Maturation in marriage (Celebration) or ("The Honeymoon is Over!")

**Song 8:5-7** - Conclusion

**Song 8:8-14** - Epilogue

## **Subtitles for the Song of Solomon: A Simple Love Song Exalting Marital Romance**

or

**"When A Husband Loves His Wife"**

or

**"The Blessedness of Conjugal Love"**

**William MacDonald** notes that "the Song of Songs has been widely, and we believe rightly, used by believing couples on their wedding night and to enhance their marriage. ([MacDonald, W & Farstad, A. Believer's Bible Commentary: Thomas Nelson](#))

**Myer Pearlman** - Other titles given: "Song of Songs" (Hebrew) meaning the best of Solomon's 1005 songs (1 Kings 4:32), "Canticles" meaning song of songs (Latin).

Regarding the practical application of the literal truth in the Song of Solomon **Constable** writes that "When Solomon originally wrote this book it was a poem about the love of two people, a man and a woman, for each other. Consequently what it reveals about love is applicable to human love. However since God revealed and inspired it as part of Scripture He also intended us to apply it to our spiritual lives, our relationship with God. That is the purpose of every other book of the Bible, and this was God's purpose in giving us this book as well. In Ephesians, Paul wrote that we should learn about Christ's love for the church from marriage (Eph 5:32-note)."

[Truth for the World](#) - Two great lessons can be learned from the Song of Solomon. First, it teaches us that monogamy (one husband and one wife) is best. This was God's original plan for marriage (Genesis 2:21-25). It is still God's plan for marriage today (Matthew 19:3-9). Second, it teaches that sexual love is right in marriage, but sinful outside of it (Hebrews 13:4).

## **The Language of the Song of Solomon**

Solomon makes repeated use of comparisons (see discussion of terms of comparison - simile and metaphor) to vividly highlight his portrayal of the idyllic love that should exist between a husband and his wife, his beloved. Note the repetition of **like** or **as** (see **simile** from Latin = something similar) in some 43 verses (out of a total of 117 verses, although some uses are added by the translators of the NASB and are therefore more properly metaphors)! **Similes** using **like** are found in - Song 1:3, 1:5, 1:7, 1:9, 1:15, 2:2, 2:3, 2:9, 2:17, 3:6, 4:1, 4:2, 4:3, 4:4, 4:5, 4:11, 5:11, 5:12, 5:13, 5:15, 6:5, 6:6, 6:7, 6:10, 7:1, 7:2, 7:3, 7:4, 7:5, 7:7, 7:8, 7:9, 8:1, 8:6, 8:10, 8:14. **Similes** using **as** are found in - Song 5:11, 5:15, 6:4, 6:10, 6:13, 8:6, 8:10. There are also numerous **metaphors** (figures of speech in which a word or phrase is applied to something that it does not literally denote in order to imply a resemblance) such as Song 5:15 "His legs are pillars of alabaster....", Song 5:16 "His mouth is full of sweetness....", etc. Read though in one sitting specifically looking to discover the **metaphors**.

**Suggestion** - As you read this love poem **meditatively** (see **Primer on Biblical Meditation**), allow the Spirit to teach you so that each time you encounter a **simile** or **metaphor**, you ask "What picture is Solomon painting with this **simile** or **metaphor**? How can I apply this truth in my marriage?" I can assure you that you will have quite an "adventure" and it cannot help but significantly impact your relationship with your spouse (but have them read it also or even better, set aside some time to read it over and over as a couple.) **Your marriage will never be quite the same!** God stands behind His promise that the Word which goes forth from His mouth will not return empty without accomplishing that which He desires (see Ge 2:24-25, see a Spirit filled relationship. "Not one word has

failed of all His good promise." (1Ki 8:56 speaking of God's word through Moses to Israel, but in principle applicable to all believers. Cp Josh 23:14, Pr 30:5-6) - Ephesians 5:18; 19; 20; 21; 22; 23; 24; 25; 26; 27; 28; 29; 30; 31; 32; 33 [see notes Eph 5:18; 19; 20; 21; 22; 23; 24; 25; 26; 27; 28; 29; 30; 31; 32; 33) and without succeeding in the matter for which He sent it (Isaiah 55:11)!

Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass. (1Th 5:24note) (See related topic Covenant: As It Relates to Marriage)

**Jensen** adds that "the phraseology of the poetry is strictly Oriental, and must be read in that light." (e.g., Chapter 4). (Ibid)

**Myer Pearlman** - Like Hebrew poetry, this Song passes suddenly from speaker to speaker and from scene to scene. The identification is usually by the pronouns used.

Song of Solomon like other Hebrew poetry, is characterized by by a literary feature known as **parallelism**, which is simply the stating and restating of an idea in close context. This may involve repetition of identical phrases or the building of one idea upon another. An example of this technique is seen in Song 1:15...

How beautiful you are, my darling,

How beautiful you are! Your eyes are like doves.

**Larry Richards** - Debate concerning Song of Songs focuses on two questions: What is this poem really about? and, What is the role of Solomon? Some have been uncomfortable with the erotic elements in this poem, and have sought to "sanctify" them with a typical or allegorical interpretation. Commentators have suggested the poem is actually about the relationship between God, as Lover, and His Old Testament or New Testament people as His beloved. It is best, however, to take the book in its plain sense as love poetry, celebrating the joys of desire and intimacy experienced by a man and woman who become husband and wife. In this view there is nothing vulgar or "unspiritual" in the experience of sex, which God created to deepen the bond of commitment in marriage. The text identifies this love poem as "Solomon's." Many characteristics of the Hebrew text suggest an ancient origin, and there is no good reason to doubt that it does date from the 10th century G.p. Still, Solomon's role is not clear. Some believe that this love poem was not composed by him, but was dedicated to him on the occasion of one of his weddings. However we understand Solomon's role, Song itself remains one of the world's most sensitive and beautiful poems; a joyous and moving celebration of married love.

## KEY IMAGES

## KEY WORDS

### Song of Solomon

**Key images** in the book include wine, the garden, the kiss, various spices and fruits, and countryside or pastoral metaphors.

**Key words** (based on the NASB 1977 unless otherwise noted) in the Song of Solomon include:

- **beloved** (31 uses in 26 verses - Song 1:13; 1:14; 1:16; 2:3; 2:8; 2:9; 2:10; 2:16; 2:17; 4:16; 5:2; 5:4; 5:5; 5:6; 5:8; 5:9; 5:10; 5:16; 6:1; 6:2; 6:3; 7:9; 7:11; 7:13; 8:5; 8:14)
- **beautiful** (15 uses in 13 verses - Song 1:8; 1:15; 2:10; 2:13; 4:1; 4:7; 4:10; 5:9; 6:1; 6:4; 6:10; 7:1; 7:6)
- **come** (14 times in 9 verses - Song 2:10; 2:13; 4:2; 4:8; 4:16; 5:1; 6:6; 6:13; 7:11)
- **darling** (9 uses in 9 verses - Song 1:9; 1:15; 2:2; 2:10; 2:13; 4:1; 4:7; 5:2; 6:4)
- **fair** (in KJV) (11 times in 9 verses - Song 1:15; 1:16; 2:10; 2:13; 4:1; 4:7; 4:10; 6:10; 7:6)
- **find** (4 uses - Song 3:1; 3:2; 5:6; 5:8)
- **fruit** (4 uses in 4 verses - Song 2:3; 7:8; 8:11; 8:12),
- **king** (5 times in 5 verses - Song 1:4; 1:12; 3:9; 3:11; 7:5)
- **love** (28 times in 25 verses {in every chapter!} - Song 1:2; 1:3; 1:4; 1:5; 1:7; 1:10; 2:4; 2:5; 2:7; 2:14; 3:1; 3:2; 3:3; 3:4; 3:5; 4:3; 4:10; 5:1; 5:8; 6:4; 7:6; 7:12; 8:4; 8:6; 8:7)
- **Solomon** (5 times in 5 verses - Song 1:5; 3:9; 3:11; 8:11; 8:12)
- **vineyard** (9 times in 6 verses - Song 1:6; 1:14; 2:15; 7:12; 8:11; 8:12)
- **wine** (7 times in 7 verses - Song 1:2; 1:4; 4:10; 5:1; 7:2; 7:9; 8:2)

## The Setting

### Song of Solomon

**Harry Ironside** in his *Addresses on the Song of Solomon* gives the following background based on the book...

King Solomon had a vineyard in the hill country of Ephraim, about 50 miles N of Jerusalem, Song 8:11. He let it out to keepers, Song 8:11, consisting of a mother, two sons, Song 1:6, and two daughters—the Shulamite, Song 6:13, and a little sister, Song 8:8. The Shulamite was "the Cinderella" of the family, Song 1:5, naturally beautiful but unnoticed. Her brothers were likely half brothers, Song 1:6. They made her work very hard tending the vineyards, so that she had little opportunity to care for her personal appearance, Song 1:6. She pruned the vines and set traps for the little foxes, Song 2:15. She also kept the flocks, Song 1:8. Being out in the open so much, she became sunburned, Song 1:5.

One day a handsome stranger came to the vineyard. It was Solomon disguised. He showed an interest in her, and she became embarrassed concerning her personal appearance, Song 1:6. She took him for a shepherd and asked about his flocks, Song 1:7. He answered evasively, Song 1:8, but also spoke loving words to her, 1:8-10, and promised rich gifts for the future, Song 1:11. He won her heart and left with the promise that some day he would return. She dreamed of him at night and sometimes thought he was near, Song 3:1. Finally he did return in all his kingly splendor to make her his bride, Song 3:6-7.3 (H. A. Ironside, *Addresses on the Song of Solomon*, pp. 17-21, summarized by Merrill Unger, *Unger's Bible Handbook*, pp. 299-300)

**Sidlow Baxter** describes the Song of Solomon as...

A lyric poem in dialogue form, the book describes Solomon's love for a Shulamite girl. The king comes in disguise to her family's vineyard, wins her heart, and ultimately makes her his bride. (J. Sidlow Baxter. *Explore the Book*)

## The Hebrew Language

### Song of Solomon

**Dennis Kinlaw** has a helpful discussion of language issues which contribute to the difficulty modern commentators have in discerning the meaning of this love poem...

Several problems confront the modern reader in the study of the text of the Song of Songs that make certainty in understanding and interpretation difficult to achieve. One of these is the matter of language.

Ancient Hebrew is a primitive tongue. The syntax is quite different from ours. Verb tenses are different so that time sequences are more difficult to establish. Word order can raise problems. There is an economy of language that can be tantalizing. And then it is poetry. There is a succinctness of style that makes it almost telegraphic. The result is that the text is often more suggestive than delineative, more impressionistic than really pictorial. Much is left to the imagination of the reader rather than spelled out for the curious modern, who wants to know the specific meaning of every detail.

Added to the preceding problems is that of vocabulary. In 117 verses there is an amazing number of rare words, words that occur only in the Song of Songs, many only once there, or else that occur only a handful of times in all the rest of the corpus of the OT. There are about 470 different words in the whole Song. Some 50 of these are *hapax legomena*. Since use is a major way of determining the meaning of words in another language, the result is that we are often uncertain as to the exact meaning of key terms and phrases.

Another problem is that the imagery used was a normal part of a culture that is very different from our modern world. The scene is pastoral and Middle Eastern. So the references to nature, birds, animals, spices, perfumes, jewelry, and places are not the normal vocabulary of the modern love story. The associations that an ancient culture gives

to its vocabulary are difficult, if not impossible, for us to recapture. The list of plants and animals is illustrative: figs, apples, lilies, pomegranates, raisins, wheat, brambles, nuts, cedar, palms, vines, doves, ravens, ewes, sheep, fawns, gazelles, goats, lions, and leopards. So is that of spices and perfumes: oils, saffron, myrrh, nard, cinnamon, henna, frankincense, and aloes. The place names carried connotations some of which are undoubtedly lost to us: Jerusalem, Damascus, Tirzah, En Gedi, Carmel, Sharon, Gilead, Senir, and Heshbon. We understand the overtones of "bedroom," but when the lover refers to "the clefts of the rock, in the hiding places on the mountainside" (Song 2:14), to gardens, parks, fields, orchards, vineyards, or valleys, we are aware that the places of rendezvous were different for lovers in that world than in ours.

The terms of endearment cause us problems. The metaphors used are often alien. When the lover likens his beloved to a mare in the chariot of Pharaoh (Song 1:9), we are surprised. "Darling among the maidens" (Song 2:2) or even "dove" (Song 2:14; 5:2; 6:9) is understandable, or "a rose of Sharon" (Song 2:1). "A garden locked up" (Song 4:12), "a sealed fountain" (Song 4:12), "a wall" (Song 8:9, 10), "a door" (Song 8:9), "beautiful ... as Tirzah" (Song 6:4), and "lovely as Jerusalem" (Song 6:4) are not our normal metaphors of love. Nor are our heroine's references to her lover as "an apple tree" (Song 2:3), "a gazelle" (Song 2:9, 17), "a young stag" (Song 2:9, 17), or "a cluster of henna" (Song 1:14).

To further complicate matters, it is not always certain who is speaking. One of the most difficult tasks is to determine who the speaker is in each verse. It is not even completely clear as to how many speakers there are. Our best clues are grammatical. Fortunately, pronominal references in Hebrew commonly reflect gender and number. In some cases, however, the masculine and the feminine forms are the same. ([Gaebelein, F. Editor: Expositor's Bible Commentary OT 7 Volume Set: Books: Zondervan Publishing](#))

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**TODAY IN THE WORD:** King Edward VIII of England shocked the world when he abdicated from the throne in order to marry the divorced American socialite Wallis Warfield Simpson. Some years later he gave marital advice to a group of his close friends about how to stay on good terms with one's spouse. "Of course, I do have a slight advantage over the rest of you," he admitted. "It does help in a pinch to be able to remind your bride that you gave up a throne for her."

Believers also have a vivid reminder of what it cost Jesus Christ to make the church His bride. He did not give up His throne forever, but He did lay aside the prerogatives of divinity and took upon Himself a human nature (Phil 2:5; 2:6; 2:7; 2:8-notes Ph 2:5; 6; 7; 8). Being fully human and fully God, He submitted to a brutal death on the cross in order to purify the church and present it to Himself as a spotless bride (Titus 2:14-note).

In many ways, this is also the drama played out in the biblical book Song of Songs, also called the Song of Solomon. One of the most mysterious and controversial books of the Bible, its message has something to say about both human marriage and the divine love God has for His church. (**Ed note:** This comment highlights the caution needed in reading commentaries on the Song. The diligent Berean must remember that God spoke literal words through the human author Solomon and these words have **one** specific meaning, but they can have a number of valid applications, which is how I would categorize the comments regarding God/Christ and the Church or Christ's Bride. Application of the truth in the Song is important but must still represent a valid reflection of God's literal words!)

Its frank description of the delights of human love has caused some people to wonder why it was included in the Bible. However, the Jewish writings known as the Mishnah quote the second-century Jewish rabbi Aquiba as saying, "All the ages are not worth 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."

**Application: Do you know a couple who reflect the biblical picture of a loving relationship? Ask them to tell you their story. How did they meet? What was it like to fall in love? What kinds of challenges have they had to overcome in order to keep their love for one another strong?**

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O happy love! - Where love like this is found!

O heart-felt raptures! bliss beyond compare!  
I've paced much this weary, mortal round,  
And sage experience bids me this declare  
"If Heaven a draught of heavenly pleasure spare,  
One cordial in this melancholy vale,  
'Tis when a youthful, loving, modest pair,  
In either's arms breathe out the tender tale,  
Beneath the milk-white thorn that scents the evening gale."  
Robert Burns in "The Cotter's Saturday Night."

## SELECT RESOURCES

### Song of Solomon

See also main resource page for Song of Solomon

**Adam Clarke** -

[Song of Solomon 1 Commentary](#)

**Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges**

[Song of Solomon 1 Commentary](#)

**Century Bible Commentary** -

[Song of Solomon 1 Commentary](#)

**Thomas Constable** - well done

[Song of Solomon Commentary](#)

**Gene Getz** short videos (3-12 minutes) -

[Song of Songs 1:1-4- Intimate Love](#)

[Song of Songs 1:4-17 - Intimate Conversations](#)

**Net Bible Notes** synchronized with Thomas Constable's notes

[Song of Solomon 1 Commentary Notes](#)

**Ellicott's Commentary** -

[Song of Solomon 1 Commentary](#)

**David Guzik**

[Song of Solomon 1 Commentary](#)

**H A Ironside**

[Song of Solomon 1 Commentary](#)

**Keil and Delitzsch** - not always literal

[Song of Solomon 1 Commentary](#)

**Lange** - Comments by verse at top of page literal. Doctrinal section at bottom is allegorical.

[Song 1 Commentary](#)

**Reformation Study Bible Notes**

[Song 1:1](#), [Song 1:2-4](#), [Song 1:4](#), [Song 1:5-6](#), [Song 1:7](#)

[Song 1:8](#), [Song 1:9](#), [Song 1:11](#), [Song 1:12](#)

[Song 1:14](#), [Song 1:15](#)

**Grant Richison** - [Theology of Sex](#) - [Recommended](#)

**Rob Salvato Sermon Notes**

[Song of Solomon 1:1-4](#)

[Song of Solomon 1:5-2:7](#)

**Third Millennium** - relatively detailed comments

[The Title - Song of Solomon 1:1](#)

[Mutual Praise and Longing - Song of Solomon 1:2-2:17](#)

[The Young Woman - Song of Solomon 1:2-4a](#)

[The Friends - Song of Solomon 1:4b](#)

[The Young Woman - Song of Solomon 1:4-7](#)

[The Friends - Song of Solomon 1:8](#)

[The Young Man - Song of Solomon 1:9-10](#)

[The Friends - Song of Solomon 1:11](#)

[The Young Woman - Song of Solomon 1:12-14](#)

[The Young Man - Song of Solomon 1:15](#)

[The Young Woman - Song of Solomon 1:16](#)

[The Young Man - Song of Solomon 1:17](#)

**Bob Utley** - brief but insightful comments on Hebrew words and phrases

[Song of Songs 1 Commentary](#)

**Steve Zeisler** - sermon notes

[Song of Songs 1:1 The Superlative Song](#)

[Song of Songs 1:2-2:7 Your Love Is Better Than Wine](#)



# SONG OF SOLOMON 1

## COMMENTARY NOTES

### Introduction...

**Song 1:1** The Song of Songs, which is Solomon's.

**Shulammitte (or young woman)** (see **\*\*Note**)...

**2** "May he kiss me with the kisses of his mouth! For your love is better than wine. (Song 5:16, 8:1) (Your love - Song 1:4 2:4, 4:10, 7:6,9,12, 8:2)

**3** "Your oils have a pleasing fragrance, Your name is like purified oil; Therefore the maidens love you. (fragrance - Song 3:6 4:10 5:5,13)(maidens - Song 6:8)

**4** "**Draw (imperative = command)** me after you and let us run together! The king has brought me into his chambers." (King - Song 2:3-5, 3:4)

### Daughters of Jerusalem (or friends) to the Shulammitte...

"We will rejoice in you and be glad; We will extol your love more than wine. Rightly do they love you.

**\*\*Note:** Solomon's abrupt change of speakers and settings can make the dialogue and plot difficult to follow. For this reason the Biblical text is supplemented with **bold green** annotations in an attempt to identify the specific speaker(s). The student is strongly advised to make his or her own assessment as some (many) of these designations are subjective and therefore difficult to defend dogmatically! The diligent student should **Be a Berean** when reading my notes or any commentary on this book.

**Carr** adds that "One of the unusual features of the Song is the major place the words of the girl have in it. Of the 117 verses in the book, 55 are directly from her lips, and another 19 are probably assigned to her. In the Song, as in much of the other ancient Near Eastern love poetry, the woman is the one who takes the initiative, and who is the more outspoken. Similarly, in the Mesopotamian Ritual Marriage materials, much is placed on the girl's lips. Our contemporary attitude, where the girl is on the defensive and the man is the initiator, is a direct contrast with the attitude in the ancient world."

**Hint:** Because the Song of Solomon makes liberal use of **terms of comparison // similes // metaphors**, it would be worthwhile read the discussion so that you are better able to interpret the many, often quite striking word pictures in the form of **terms of comparison**.

**Song 1:1** The Song of Songs, which is Solomon's.

- **NET Bible** - Solomon's Most Excellent Love Song.
- **NLT** - This is Solomon's song of songs, more wonderful than any other. Young Woman

As you read and study this Song keep in your mind **the three main divisions** - The Courtship (Falling in Love) Song 1:2-3:5, (2) The Wedding (United in Love) Song 3:6-5:1 and (3) The Maturing Marriage (Struggling and Growing in Love) Song 5:2-8:14

This ancient love song reminds us to rejoice in God's gift of marital intimacy, and to welcome that gift without hesitation or shame. (Richards)

**Temper Longman** offers the following interesting "Outline" of this Song...

Superscription (Song 1:1)

I. First Love Poem: The Woman's Pursuit (Song 1:2-4)

II. Second Love Poem: Dark but Beautiful (Song 1:5-6)

III. Third Love Poem: Teasing Lovers (Song 1:7-8)

IV. Fourth Love Poem: A Beautiful Mare (Song 1:9-11)

V. Fifth Love Poem: Intimate Fragrances (Song 1:12-14)

VI. Sixth Love Poem: Outdoor Love (Song 1:15-17)

VII. Seventh Love Poem: Flowers and Trees (Song 2:1-7)

- VIII. Eighth Love Poem: Springtime (Song 2:8–17)
- IX. Ninth Love Poem: Seeking and Not Finding (Song 3:1–5)
- X. Tenth Love Poem: A Royal Wedding Procession (Song 3:6–11)
- XI. Eleventh Love Poem: From Head to Breasts (Song 4:1–7)
- XII. Twelfth Love Poem: The Invitation (Song 4:8–9)
- XIII. Thirteenth Love Poem: The Garden of Love (Song 4:10–5:1)
- XIV. Fourteenth Love Poem: Seeking and Not Finding, Again (Song 5:2–6:3)
- XV. Fifteenth Love Poem: An Army with Banners (Song 6:4–10)
- XVI. Sixteenth Love Poem: In the Nut Grove (Song 6:11–12)
- XVII. Seventeenth Love Poem: The Dancing Shulammite (Song 6:13–7:9)
- XVIII. Eighteenth Love Poem: I Will Give You My Love (Song 7:10–13)
- XIX. Nineteenth Love Poem: Yearning for Love (Song 8:1–4)
- XX. Twentieth Love Poem: Love More Powerful than Death (Song 8:5–7)
- XXI. Twenty-first Love Poem: Protecting the Sister (Song 8:8–10)
- XXII. Twenty-second Love Poem: The Owner of the Vineyard (Song 8:11–12)
- XXIII. Twenty-third Love Poem: Be Like a Gazelle (Song 8:13–14)

(Cornerstone Biblical Commentary - Song of Songs)

**Song of Songs** - This verse gives the book its **title** (NIV = "Solomon's Song of Songs"). This book is also frequently referred to in older literature as "**Canticles**" (Latin canticle = song). This is a Hebrew idiom meaning "**The Most Exquisite Song**". This phrase is a grammatical way of expressing the superlative degree (in comparison this denotes a level surpassing all others) and thus says this is the best, the greatest or the most beautiful of all of Solomon's 1005 songs (compare more familiar superlative phrases like "Holy of Holies" = the holiest place, "King of kings" = the highest of all kings). The Jewish Midrash (ancient commentary on Hebrew scriptures, attached to the biblical text) calls Song of Solomon "the most praiseworthy, most excellent, most highly treasured among the songs."

As an aside, the **Song of Songs** in our English Bibles is the fifth of the poetical books (Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon). However, in the Hebrew Bible the Song is the first of the "five rolls" or "five scrolls" (along with Ruth, Esther, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations) which are together known as the Megilloth and which were read by the Jews on their feast days. The Jews saw their nation "married to Jehovah" (Isa 50:1; 54:4, 5; Jer. 3; Ezek. 16, 23; Hosea 1-3), and for this reason read portions of the Song of Solomon annually on the eighth day of Passover. Reading the Song of Solomon reminded them to love the Lord their God with all their heart (Deut 6:4-5).

**Jensen** adds that "In ancient times the Jews revered Canticles as uniquely sublime. They likened Proverbs to the outer court of the Temple; Ecclesiastes to the holy place; and Song of Solomon to the most holy place." (Jensen's Survey of the OT)

**Longman** - The superscription is like a title page in a modern book. We are introduced to the content of what follows in the bulk of the book. Here, we learn that the composition that follows is the "song of songs." We often use this phrase as the title of the book, and that is in keeping with the ancient practice of using the first phrase of a text as its title. The expression "song of songs" tells us that what follows was likely sung with musical accompaniment. (Ibid)

**Which is Solomon's** - if taken literally (which is the natural and "*safest*" mode of interpretation) King Solomon is the author (mentioned in Song 1:1, 1:5; 3:7, 3:9, 3:11; 8:11, 8:12), an interpretation which finds agreement among most evangelical scholars. There is naturally some question as to how a "*polygamist*" (cp 1Ki 11:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13) such as Solomon could pen such a beautiful story of intimacy in a monogamous relationship between a husband and wife. While there is no absolute answer to this legitimate question, the best supposition is that Solomon penned this work as a younger man, before the events of 1Kings began to unravel. One simply cannot be dogmatic.

**Wilkinson and Boa** write that "the internal evidence of the book strongly favors the traditional position that Solomon is its author." (Talk Thru the Bible)

Further support that this was King Solomon, is the Shulammite's acknowledgement that he is **king** in Song 1:4 (also 4 other times -

Song 1:12; 3:9, 11; 7:5), which would date this book at sometime during his reign (971-931BC).

In Kings we read of Solomon's literary prowess - He also spoke 3,000 proverbs, and his songs were 1,005. (1Ki 4:32) **Comment:** And to reiterate, this "song" was the "song of songs", the top of the proverbial "hit parade" so to speak!

### Shulamite (or young woman)

Song 1:2 "May he kiss me with the kisses of his mouth! For your love is better than wine. (Song 5:16, 8:1) (Song 1:4 2:4, 4:10, 7:6,9,12, 8:2)

## THE WOMAN'S PURSUIT

### Song 1:2-4

- **NET Bible** - Oh, how I wish you would kiss me passionately! For your lovemaking is more delightful than wine.
- **NLT** - Kiss me and kiss me again, for your love is sweeter than wine.

**May he kiss me...for your love** - The woman begins the song (and in fact speaks more often than the man throughout the song). Love often begins with a sudden intensity, an anticipation and an air of excitement. Clearly this opening indicates they have already "fallen in love." Some feel that she is in the palace in Jerusalem and is recalling her meeting with the shepherd who she came to understand was King Solomon.

**NET Note on better than wine** - With the comparison of lovemaking to **wine**, the idea is probably "*more intoxicating than wine*" or "*more delightful than wine.*" The young woman compares his lovemaking to the intoxicating effects of wine. A man is to be "intoxicated" with the love of his wife (Pr 5:20). Wine makes the heart glad (Dt 14:26; Jdg 9:13; Ps 104:15) and revives the spirit (2Sa 16:1-2; Pr 31:4-7). It is viewed as a gift from God, given to enable man to enjoy life (Eccl 2:24-25; 5:18). The ancient Egyptian love poems use the imagery of **wine and intoxication** to describe the **overwhelming effects of sexual love**. For example, an ancient Egyptian love song reads: "I embrace her and her arms open wide; I am like a man in Punt, like someone overwhelmed with drugs. I kiss her and her lips open; and I am drunk without beer" (ANET 467-69).

**Your love is better than wine** - Love is the Hebrew word *dodim* (in the plural) which refers to physical love.

Why is Solomon's love for her better than wine? The effects of wine are temporarily exhilarating, while the effects of Solomon's love are lasting.

Notice also that in verses 2 and 3 she mentions the senses of touch (kiss), taste (wine) and smell (pleasing fragrance).

**Temper Longman** - We should notice how she describes his desirability in a very sensuous way. She wants the intimate touch of a kiss. She describes his love as sweet to the taste. His name, which here has the connotation of reputation, has the smell of cologne. Love in the Song has a very physical side; it is expressed unabashedly through the union of two bodies. In reference to taste, she compares his love to wine, a thick liquid that lingers on the palette. Furthermore, love can lift the human spirit in the same way as wine; both intoxicate. (Cornerstone Biblical Commentary)

**Love** (01730 - דָּד) (**dod**) is translated two entirely distinct ways - uncle and love (beloved). The first 12 uses in the Pentateuch and historical books are all translated **uncle**. When one comes to the Wisdom literature we see that **dod** begins to be translated as love and is a key word in the book of Solomon which has 38 uses in 31 verses.

Here in Song 1:2 **dod** is plural "your loves." (see note in next paragraph)

EBC notes that the Hebrew = **dod** - Strong's = 1730 is used here in the **plural form** (plural in Song 1:2, 1:4; 4:10; 7:12) ...In each case (Song 1:2, 1:4; 4:10; 7:12) it seems best, as Carr suggests, to translate the plural form as "love-making." ([Gaebelein, F. Editor: Expositor's Bible Commentary OT 7 Volume Set: Books: Zondervan Publishing](#))

In this first use in Song, **dod** is translated in the **Septuagint (Lxx)** (also in Song 1:4) with the noun **mastos** which means breast and can describe either sex (e.g., see John's description of Jesus in Rev 1:13) = "For your breasts are good beyond wine." Clearly this verse in Hebrew is depicting her longing for a physical relationship. One gets the picture of her placing her head on his chest (or desiring to do so).

The **NET Note** says "In terms of internal evidence, the LXX form דָּדֵךָ (*daddekha*, "your [male!] breasts") is a bit shocking, to say the least. On the other, the plural form דָּדִים (*dodim*, "loves") is used in the Song to refer to multiple expressions of love or multiple acts

of lovemaking (e.g., Song 1:4; 4:10; 5:1; 7:12). Although it may be understood in the general sense meaning “love” (Song 1:4), the term **דוד** (dod) normally means “lovemaking” (Prov 7:18; Song 4:10; 7:12[13]; Ezek 16:8; 23:17). The plural form **דודים** (dodekha, lit. “your lovemakings”) is probably not a plural of number but an abstract plural (so BDB 187 s.v. 3 דוד). "

Dod - 53v - Lev 10:4; 20:20; 25:49; Num 36:11; 1 Sam 10:14ff; 14:50; 2 Kgs 24:17; 1 Chr 27:32; Esth 2:7, 15; Pr 7:18; Song 1:2, 4, 13f, 16; 2:3, 8ff, 16f; 4:10, 16; 5:1f, 4ff, 8ff, 16; 6:1ff; 7:9ff; 8:5, 14; Isa 5:1; Jer 32:7ff, 12; Ezek 16:8; 23:17; Amos 6:10. **Dod is translated in NAS as** beloved(31), beloved's(1), beloved's and my beloved(1), love(8), lovers(1), uncle(11), uncle's(6), uncles'(1).

**Brian Bell** - The song opens with the woman longing for her beloved. (Song 1:2-4a) Though she longs for this it doesn't say it's happening “o dating one's”! Is kissing ok in relationships? – Not “Good Kissing!!!” - cus what does it do if you're a good kisser? – It excites, it stirs passion, she warns the young ladies (Song 2:7, 3:5, 8:4) “Do not stir up nor awaken love Until it pleases.” See 1Th 4:3-6. Now lets put us in the picture! Ps 2:12 says to “Kiss the Son”. George Muller said, “Your 1st & most imp. Duty of the day is “to get your own soul happy in the Lord.” The Lord wants not only kiss us with the kiss of forgiveness (prodigal), but w/the kiss of Intimacy! (i.e. forsake all others, be faithful to him) Never kiss 2 girls at once! – be only committed to one/him (Song 1:2b) Wine = Joy. – Gods love (His presence) is far better than any earthly substance. Have you experienced that at a retreat? During communion? During Worship? ([Song of Solomon 1](#))

**HCSB** - The abrupt beginning artistically weds style to content, signaling to the reader that the Song will move at a quick and entrancing pace. The speaker is unidentified at this point. Later we learn that she is “the Shulammitte” (Song 6:13).

Note also that in the first part of the verse she speaks **of** him in the third person (“may **he** kiss me”) and in the second part changes to the second person (“**your** love”) seemingly speaking **to** him!

**Constable** offers this explanation for the change in person from **third** to **first** writing that “The use of both third and second person address (“**he**” and “**you**”) is a bit confusing. Is she speaking about him or to him? This feature of ancient oriental poetry is common in other Near Eastern love poems that archaeologists have discovered. It was a device that ancient writers evidently employed to strengthen the emotional impact of what they wrote. Here the girl appears to be speaking about her love, not to him. ([Expository Notes](#))

**EBC** adds that “It is as if she begins with the wish in her mind and then shifts almost unwittingly to speaking directly to him.”

**Hubbard** writes that although the Scripture has much to say about marriage “the Song of Songs is different. Here sex is for joy, for union, for relationship, for celebration. Its lyrics contain no aspirations to pregnancy, no anticipations of parenthood. The focus is not on progeny to assure the continuity of the line but on passion to express the commitment to covenant between husband and wife. (Hubbard, David A. Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon. Communicator's Commentary series. Dallas: Word Books, 1991)

Joe Guglielmo - Song 1:2-4 - We tend to think that affection is wrong; it is not when that affection is toward your spouse. You should have that kind of affection for your spouse! And here we see her saying, “Let him smoothe me with kisses.” There is nothing more she desires in this world than his affection towards her, it was satisfying, refreshing, a source of joy. May we have that kind of love for our spouse! Now I did say that we see here a picture of Christ and His Bride, the Church. And in regards to the Bride, His Bride, we are to have that kind of love for the Lord. True joy, true satisfaction is found in Him and not in this world. That is the kind of love God wants us to have for Him. That there is nothing else we would desire more than an intimate relationship with Him. Think of it like this to help put it into perspective. You can't kiss two people at the same time. That means that God wants us to love Him and not be in love with the world! We are told in Psalm 84:10-11, “For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God Than dwell in the tents of wickedness. For the LORD God is a sun and shield; The LORD will give grace and glory; No good thing will He withhold From those who walk uprightly.” And knowing that God's love for us is better than anything that the world has for us should cause us to love Him even more! The old Puritan commentator John Trapp said of this verse, “She must have Christ, or else she dies; she must have the ‘kisses of Christ's mouth,’ even those sweet pledges of love in his Word, or she cannot be contented, but will complain.” May we have that kind of love, that kind of passion for the Lord! **Song of Solomon**)

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**Finding True Love - Song 1:2** - In the book of Ecclesiastes, Solomon described his search for the meaning of life. Many of us can relate to that frustration and the desire to understand life's purpose. But there is another side to our search, and it is centered on our hearts. We long to be loved. For the rest of the month we'll turn our attention to the Song of Songs, also attributed to Solomon.

Many have said the key purpose to life is to love and be loved. In Matthew 22:37–39, when asked what was the greatest commandment, Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. . . . And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’” His answer featured heart language: Love. We want to experience the satisfaction of loving and of being loved. This is the central subject of the Song of Songs.

Chapter 1 sets the scene as a conversation between several parties. Verse 1 identifies Solomon as the author; verse 2 lets us hear the voice of his beloved. The book lets us listen in on the romance between a young woman and the man she adores. The book is filled with deep passion and yearning for physical love: "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth—for your love is more delightful than wine."

Love, at its inception, is intense and overwhelming. She uses sensory details here, like wine and perfume, to describe the heady feeling of being drawn to another person (vv. 2–4). We also learn a bit more about who this woman is. She works in the fields (v. 5) and her skin is darkened from the sun (v. 6). She feels neglected by family and longs, most of all, to be loved by her suitor.

Apply the Word - Have you ever fallen in love? Remember those first moments of seeing that special person? Remember those first words of conversation? Those first glances? The heart has an ability and a need to feel love—both earthly and eternal. It is a good gift from God to remember the pleasure of loving and being loved and to tell our love stories to one another. (Today in the Word)

### Shulamite (or young woman)

**Song 1:3 "Your oils have a pleasing fragrance, Your name is like purified oil; Therefore the maidens love you (fragrance - Song 3:6 4:10 5:5,13)(maidens - Song 6:8)**

**NET** - The fragrance of your colognes is delightful; your name is like the finest perfume. No wonder the young women adore you!

**NLT** - How fragrant your cologne; your name is like its spreading fragrance. No wonder all the young women love you!

**HCSB** - Name (Heb shem) and perfume (Heb shemen) are similar in Hebrew, so the Song presents here the first of its frequent wordplays. Since names were thought to capture essence, the praise also begins an important theme—that desire arises out of delight.

**Dummelow** - Orientals have always been passionately fond of perfumes. The literatures of Egypt, Greece, and Rome abound in references to them: in the Bible see Psalms 23:5; Psalms 45:7-8; Proverbs 7:17; Proverbs 27:9; Luke 7:46; John 12:3. A modern traveler writes: 'Arabs are delighted with perfumes; the nomad housewives make treasure of any they have, with their medicines; they often asked me, "Hast thou no perfumes to sell?" The 'poured-out' unguent gives forth its fragrance: even so is the beloved's name praised of many.

**NET Note on oils or colognes** - The term שֶׁמֶן (**shemen**, "cologne") refers to perfumes or colognes (Eccl 7:1; 10:1; Song 4:10). In Israel bodily oils were expensive (1Kgs 17:12ff; 2Kgs 2:4ff). Possession of oils and perfumes was a sign of prosperity and luxury (Deut 32:8; 33:24; Job 29:6; Pr 21:17; Ezek 16:13, 20). Wearing cologne was associated with joy (Ps 45:8; Eccl 9:8; Isa 61:3) because they were worn on festive occasions (Prov 27:9).

Here in Song 1:3 the **Septuagint (Lxx)** translates shemen with the noun muron which means an ointment, perfume, sweet-smelling substance made not from animal fats but from plants (Mt 26:12, Lk 7:38, 46, Jn 11:2, Mk 14:4-5, Jn 12:3, 5, et al).

**Oils (cognes)** ([08081 - שֶׁמֶן](#)) (**shemen - word study** shemen = become or make fat) refers to grease, especially liquid (as from the olive, often perfumed). Shemen usually referred to olive oil that was prepared for various purposes. It could also refer to the shortening in cooking (1Ki 17:12-16) or the mixing of oil with flour in the baking of bread (Ex 29:40, Lev 2:1-7; 8:26). **Shemen** played an important part in sacrifices and worship as when Jacob poured oil on top of the stone (Ge 28:18) Shemen was used for anointing a future office holder (Ex. 25:6; 2Ki 9:6). (cp to our Lord's agony in Gath Shemen [Gethsemane] in Mt 26:36ff.) as well as for anointing kings and priests (Ex 30:23-33; Lev 8:12; 1Sa 16:13; 1Ki 1:39). Oil was placed on one's earlobe, thumb, and large toe as a ritual cleansing (Lev 14:17) The oil itself was sometimes given as an offering (Lev 2:15, 16; Ezek 45:14). However it is notable that the sin offering (Lev 5:11) and the grain offering of jealousy (Nu 5:15) were not to have any oil added to them. The tabernacle and its contents were consecrated with oil (Lev 8:10). Oil was put upon a person's head as a sign of mourning (2Sa 14:2) but was also a sign of rejoicing (Ps 23:5). Oil served as fuel for light (Ex 25:6). Oil was a valuable item for trading (Ezek 27:17). Lavish dishes were mixed with olive oil (Isa 25:6). Oil was sometimes used as medication (Ezek 16:9 [cf. Lk 10:34; Jas5:14]). Finally, oil was useful as a preservative on leather covering of shields (2Sa 1:21).

Shemen. Oil, generally olive oil whether pure or prepared for various uses such as perfume or ointment. It is used 190 times. A synonym is yishar which also means "olive oil." shemen is the general word for olive oil in its various uses, while yishar refers to the fresh product. it is regularly associated with tirosh "new wine" and dagan "grain" in reference to the produce of the land. (shemen is sometimes associated with yayin as a part of provisions "wine.") The word heleb refers to animal fat, though it may be used metaphorically in reference to that which is best or select. shemen has cognates in Akkadian, Phoenician, Arabic, Syriac, and

Ugaritic. It is generally used in the literal sense, though its metaphoric use is not uncommon. The oil referred to is generally olive oil (Est 2:12 "oil of myrrh" may be a liquid from of myrrh, or it could be myrrh mixed with oil), and it played a very important role in the life of the ancients.

**Shemen** NAS Translations = choice(1), fatness(2), fertile(2), fertile\*(1), lavish(1), oil(176), oils(3), ointment(1), olive(6), wild\*(1).

**Shemen** - 176v - Gen 28:18; 35:14; Exod 25:6; 27:20; 29:2, 7, 21, 23, 40; 30:24f, 31; 31:11; 35:8, 14f, 28; 37:29; 39:37f; 40:9; Lev 2:1f, 4f, 15f; 5:11; 6:15, 21; 7:10, 12; 8:2, 10, 12, 26, 30; 9:4; 10:7; 14:10, 12, 15ff, 21, 24, 26ff; 21:10, 12; 23:13; 24:2; Num 4:9, 16; 5:15; 6:15; 7:13, 19, 25, 31, 37, 43, 49, 55, 61, 67, 73, 79; 8:8; 11:8; 15:4, 6, 9; 28:5, 9, 12f, 20, 28; 29:3, 9, 14; 35:25; Deut 8:8; 28:40; 32:13; 33:24; 1 Sam 10:1; 16:1, 13; 2 Sam 1:21; 14:2; 1 Kgs 1:39; 5:11; 6:23, 31ff; 17:12, 14, 16; 2 Kgs 4:2, 6f; 9:1, 3, 6; 20:13; 1 Chr 9:29; 12:40; 27:28; 2 Chr 2:10, 15; 11:11; Ezra 3:7; Neh 8:15; Esth 2:12; Job 29:6; Ps 23:5; 45:7; 55:21; 89:20; 92:10; 104:15; 109:18, 24; 133:2; 141:5; Prov 5:3; 21:17, 20; 27:9, 16; Eccl 7:1; 9:8; 10:1; Song 1:3; 4:10; Isa 1:6; 5:1; 10:27; 25:6; 28:1, 4; 39:2; 41:19; 57:9; 61:3; Jer 40:10; 41:8; Ezek 16:9, 13, 18f; 23:41; 27:17; 32:14; 45:14, 24f; 46:5, 7, 11, 14f; Hos 2:5; 12:1; Amos 6:6; Mic 6:7, 15; Hag 2:12

- [Oil - Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology](#)
- [Oil - International Standard Bible Encyclopedia](#)
- [Oil - Holman Bible Dictionary](#)
- [Oil - Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible](#)
- [Oil - Hastings' Dictionary of the New Testament](#)
- [Oil - Torrey's Topical Textbook](#)
- [Oil - Fausset's Bible Dictionary](#)
- [Oil - The 1901 Jewish Encyclopedia](#)

**Your name is like purified oil ("your name is perfume")** In the OT times, one's name represented one's character, indicating her attraction to Solomon was not just external and physical, but also to his inner person.

**Like purified oil** - Song of Solomon makes liberal use of **terms of comparison // similes // metaphors**. A **simile** is easily identified by a preceding "as" or "like." **As** is used in 9v - Song 5:6, 8, 11, 15; 6:4, 10, 13; 8:6, 10. **Like** is used 47x in 36v - Song 1:3, 5, 7, 9, 15; 2:2, 3, 9, 17; 3:6; 4:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 11; 5:11, 12, 13, 15; 6:5, 6, 7, 10; 7:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9; 8:1, 6, 10, 14. Ask the Spirit, your Teacher to guide you in the correct interpretation of these terms of comparison and this should greatly assist your understanding of this great love letter.

**Brian Bell** - His presence is fragrant to her – both in his affection & character.. He had a "good name" (i.e. reputation, character)! Pr.22:1 "A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, Loving favor rather than silver and gold." How is your name? – People automatically think of something when they think of you. - What is your name associated with? What do you think of when I mention these names? Pres. Clinton; Billy Graham; Saddam Hussein; Nixon, Reagan, Gandhi, Denis Rodman, Dr. Laura. The "good name" is gained by godly consistency. Lk.7:2-5 "And a certain centurion's servant, who was dear to him, was sick and ready to die. So when he heard about Jesus, he sent elders of the Jews to Him, pleading with Him to come and heal his servant. And when they came to Jesus, they begged Him earnestly, saying that the one for whom He should do this was deserving, "for he loves our nation, and has built us a synagogue."

Song 2:2 Like a **Joe Guglielmo** - The Shulamite woman goes on to say that his ointment is good, and ointment is soothing and it releases a fragrance when applied to our lives. Glickman ([Ref](#)) Song 2:2 Like a put it like this regarding these words, "When she said that his name was 'perfume poured forth,' she meant that his character was as fragrant and refreshing as cologne poured out of a bottle. This is the reason the girls around the palace loved him – not just because he was handsome though that he was, but because his inner person was so attractive." Make no mistake about it, the fragrance of Jesus is beautiful and it draws people to Him. When we draw close to Him, know His character, we pick up His fragrance and thus, we carry it with us wherever we go. Paul speaks of this very thing in II Corinthians 2:14-17, "Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place. For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. To the one we are the aroma of death leading to death, and to the other the aroma of life leading to life. And who is sufficient for these things? For we are not, as so many, peddling the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as from God, we speak in the sight of God in Christ." We are to emanate the fragrance of Jesus, it should permeate our lives and spring forth from our being and as we do some are drawn to it and get saved and others are repulsed by it and are lost. But you will never emanate the fragrance of Jesus unless you are close to Him. Whatever you are close to is what will emanate from your life! Song 2:2 Like a ([Song of Solomon](#))

**Song 1:4 "Draw (imperative = command) me after you and let us run together! The king has brought me into his chambers." (King - Song 2:3-5, 3:4)**

**NET Bible** - Draw me after you; let us hurry! May the king bring me into his bedroom chambers! We will rejoice and delight in you; we will praise your love more than wine. How rightly the young women adore you!

**NLT** - Take me with you; come, let's run! The king has brought me into his bedroom. Young Women of Jerusalem How happy we are for you, O king. We praise your love even more than wine. Young Woman How right they are to adore you.

**Draw me after you** - Her description of his love brings forth this cry to take her with him. The heart of the bride-to-be is filled with intense longing for the absent bridegroom.

**The king has brought me into his chambers** - This can also be phrased as a request such as "May the king bring me into his chambers." The allusion to **king** indicates that is a royal romance. Also note that considering the meaning of **chambers**, she is clearly expressing a normal, healthy desire for intimacy with Solomon (cf Pr 5:18-19).

**Chambers** - Hebrew word **heder** (2315) is translated in the Lxx with the Greek noun **tamieion** = hidden, secret room, innermost, the place Joseph entered to weep in Ge 43:30. **Heder** is used in Joel 2:16...

Bring everyone--the elders, the children, and even the babies. Call the bridegroom from his **quarters** (KJV = chamber) and the bride from her private room. (cf 2Ki 11:2 heder = "bedroom")

**We will rejoice and be glad** - "We" is interpreted by most as the daughters of Jerusalem who were friends with the Shulammitte. The women express their approval of Solomon and the romance. By way of application, although our friends do not generally choose our mates for us, their approval can be a source of encouragement.

**Brian Bell** - Draw me away she says...and I'll run after you. I don't know if it still is culturally right for the guy to call on the girl rather than vice-versa? (I think that's the way it should be...call me chauvinistic) Jesus said, "you have not chosen me, but I have chosen you." (Jn.15:16) We can't seek the lord until He draws us! (Jn.6:44 "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him;") It's not a laziness issue on our part but a "powerless" issue! This is a great prayer, "Draw me, & we will run after you!" Stir my heart, pull my heart strings...& I will respond!. "into his chambers" – For what? Not Intimacy! Before the king became her lover he must be acknowledged as king. Biblically you must 1st commit yourself to a person before intimacy. Vice-versa is immorality! The rest of the verse the daughters echo her praise of him, they respond w/Yep! Good catch! We're behind you.

**Daughters of Jerusalem (or friends) to the Shulammitte...**

**"We will rejoice in you and be glad; We will extol your love more than wine. Rightly do they love you.**

These women are always treated and referred to as a group. They are a group of friends of the young woman. Their presence serves different purposes in the Song. In 1:4 they function as an external attestation to the qualities of the young man. They agree with the young woman that this man is indeed desirable. Further, at the end of the poem they celebrate the love that they see existing between the two. At the end of this poem, we see that the woman speaks one last time. She speaks to her king-lover and affirms that "they," the young women, are right when they adore him. She is not jealous but rather takes their words as a confirmation of her own judgment.

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**NO WONDER!** (Song 1:1-4, 1Jn 4:19) - "He's perfect for you," my friend told me. She was talking about a guy she had just met. She described his kind eyes, his kind smile, and his kind heart. When I met him I had to agree. Today he's my husband, and no wonder I love him!

In the Song of Solomon the bride describes her lover. His love is better than wine and more fragrant than ointments. His name is sweeter than anything in this world. So she concludes that it's no wonder he is loved. But there is Someone far greater than any earthly loved one, Someone whose love is also better than wine. His love satisfies our every need. His "fragrance" is better than any perfume because when He gave Himself for us, His sacrifice became a sweet-smelling aroma to God (Eph. 5:2). Finally, His name is above every name (Phil. 2:9). No wonder we love Him! It is a privilege to love Jesus. It is the best experience in life! Do we take the time to tell Him so? Do we express with words the beauty of our Savior? If we show His beauty with our lives, others will say, "No wonder you love Him!" Lord, You are beautiful! No wonder we love You! Deepen our love for You today, we pray. Help us see Your beauty in new ways. God's Word tells us of His love; our words tell Him of our love. (by Keila Ochoa)

**INSIGHT:** Although the writer of this book is not identified, the authorship of Song of Solomon—also referred to as Song of Songs—is traditionally attributed to Solomon (he is briefly mentioned in Song 1:5; 3:9-11; 8:11-12). Solomon wrote 1,005 songs (1 Kings

4:32), and many scholars view “Solomon’s Song of Songs” (Song 1:1) as meaning “the best of songs.” For centuries, beginning around the Middle Ages, many interpreted the Song of Solomon as an allegory of Christ’s love for the church. However, most scholars today see it as an anthology of about 20 poems that describe two lovers celebrating their intimate love for each other. Song of Solomon and the book of Esther are the only two biblical books that never mention God. Sim Kay Tee ([No Wonder! - Our Daily Bread](#))

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**TODAY IN THE WORD:** For several years, Tedd would propose to Jane on every Valentine’s Day. Each time she would reply, “Not yet.” Tedd finished college, began his career, and still continued to propose. And Janet continued to refuse. Finally, Tedd reached the end of his patience and determined that this Valentine’s Day would be the last. Janet would either agree to marry him or he would move on. As Tedd was about to propose for the last time, Janet told him that she had a gift for him. Curious, Ted unwrapped the package and looked inside to find a beautiful embroidery that Janet had made for him. It had a single word on it: “Yes.”

The first few verses of the Song of Solomon express the same sentiment. The book opens with a description of the bride’s longing for her lover. As she paints a portrait of the one she loves, she also draws back the veil on her own heart.

The effect of her lover’s presence is intoxicating. His love is compared to wine. His name is like perfume. Her opening request is that the one she loves will kiss her with “the kisses of his mouth.” Although it was not unusual for people to greet one another with a kiss in the ancient world, this was usually only a formality, something like what is often called an “air kiss” today. In the opening verses of this book, however, the bride asks for much more. She does not want a mere peck on the cheek or friendly hug. She longs for an intimate sign of her lover’s affection.

The bride also longs to be in her lover’s presence. She invites the groom to take her away and bring her into his chambers.

Her plea reflects a common desire we all share. We may not all marry, but we all long for a love so powerful that it will “sweep us off our feet.” Human love is important and a wonderful gift from God, but in the end it will still fail to meet our most secret longings. In the end, our ultimate “yes” must be reserved for God. It is His love alone that can satisfy our deepest desire.

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**R C Sproul** - Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth—for your love is more delightful than wine. [Song of Songs 1:1–2] The Song of Songs, also called “Canticles” or the “Song of Solomon,” has a history of controversy. It is clearly a song about love between a man and a woman, including the physical dimension. Indeed, it celebrates the joys of the marital relationship. Some have questioned whether it belongs in the Bible. It does not seem to be spiritual enough to be included in the canon of Scripture; indeed, some of its intimate language seems downright embarrassing. Early Jewish expositors decided that the Song was really applying romantic love to the relationship between Yahweh and Israel. According to them, the marriage of the Lord and his people was set forth in the book as an allegory. Early Christian expositors continued to look at the book allegorically, seeing in it a symbolic description of Christ’s love for his church, and hers for him. **But, while certainly the Song can be applied in a general way to the relationship of Christ to his bride, there is no reason to believe that such a symbolic application is the book’s primary focus.** One of the worst influences of pagan philosophy on the early church was the idea that sexual love is always tainted with evil. Perpetual virginity came to be prized more than marriage. This departs from the Bible, where virginity is a gift to be given to the beloved on the wedding night. Many in the church came to believe that sexual expression, even in marriage, is sinful and should be endured only for the sake of having children. Naturally, the Song of Songs, which celebrates the joy of physical love, had to be reinterpreted by those whose view of sexuality was so narrow. According to the Bible, however, the marital relationship in all of its aspects, including the physical, is a great gift of God. It is not to be despised, but enjoyed. Genesis 2 explicitly says that it was “not good” for the man to be without a wife. From the biblical perspective, marriage is good, including sexual union within marriage. Therefore, we should not be surprised to find a book in the Bible that celebrates this benefit of God’s grace to his children.

**Coram Deo** - The Song of Songs can help us have a healthy view of the goodness of romance in courtship and marriage. If you are married, consider doing a study of the book with your spouse. If you are single, read it with the view of preparing to commit yourself totally to the one God might give to you in marriage. Has Western culture’s abuse of human sexuality affected your perception of the good relationship between a man and a woman? (**Tabletalk** )



### Shulammitte (or young woman) ...

**Song 1:5** "I am black but lovely, O daughters of Jerusalem ([picture](#)), Like the tents of [Kedar \(note\)](#), Like the curtains of Solomon.

**6** "Do not stare at me because I am swarthy (of a dark color, complexion), for the sun has burned me. My mother's sons were angry with me; They made me caretaker of the vineyards ([picture](#)), but I have not taken care of my own vineyard. (Caretaker - Song 8:11,12)

**7** "**Tell (imperative = command)** me, O you whom my soul loves, Where do you pasture (feed) your flock, Where do you make it lie down at noon? For why should I be like one who veils herself (see note below) Beside the flocks of your companions?" (O you - Song 2:3 3:1-4 5:8,10,16) (You - Song 1:15 2:10 4:1,7,10 5:9 6:1,4-10 7:1-13)

### Daughters of Jerusalem (or friends) to the Shulammitte (alternatively others favor this as Solomon speaking)...

**8** "If you yourself do not know, Most beautiful among women, **Go forth** (imperative) on the trail of the flock, And **pasture** (feed) (**imperative = command**) your young goats by the tents of the shepherds.

### Shulammitte (or young woman)

**Song 1:5** "I am black but lovely, O daughters of Jerusalem ([picture](#)), Like the tents of [Kedar \(note\)](#), Like the curtains of Solomon.

## BLACK BUT BEAUTIFUL

Song 1:5-6

- **NET Bible** - I am dark but lovely, O maidens of Jerusalem, dark like the tents of Qedar, lovely like the tent curtains of Salmah.
- **NLT** - I am dark but beautiful, O women of Jerusalem-- dark as the tents of Kedar, dark as the curtains of Solomon's tents.

**Black but lovely...like the tents of [Kedar \(note\)](#)** - Here she seems self conscious as she describes her dark complexion which is the result of exposure to the sun during the days in which she worked in her family vineyard under the supervision of her brothers (in contrast to the typical lady of the court). Nevertheless, she remains confident about her own loveliness.

The [Kedar](#) describes a territory SE of Damascus (cf. Ge 25:13; Isa. 60:7) where the nomadic Bedouin roamed and made tents out of the hair of black goats. (See also [Kedar - Holman Bible Dictionary](#))

**NET Note on Kedar (Qedar)** - The comparison of her dark, outdoors appearance to the "tents of Qedar" is quite fitting for two reasons. First, the name "**Qedar**" refers to an ancient Arabian tribe of bedouin who lived in tents and inhabited a region in northern Arabia. Their tents were traditionally woven from the wool of black goats. They were not beautiful to look at; they were rough, rustic, rugged, and weather-beaten. Second, the terms shekhorah, ("black") and qedar ("Qedar") create a wordplay because the root qadar means "dark, dirty". The point of the comparison is that the Beloved had dark skin and a rugged outdoors appearance because she had been forced to work outdoors, and so her skin had become dark as Song 1:6 states.

**Longman** - Kedar is a tribe of nomads from the Syro-Arabian desert, mentioned often in the Bible (Gen 25:13; Jer 49:28–29). We have no other indication of the color of their tents, but the passage here suggests that they were widely known as being dark in color, perhaps woven from brown or black goat hair, as some modern [Bedouin](#) tents are. The same could be said of the curtains of Solomon's tents.....This poem is a self-description by the woman. She presents an apology for her appearance and explains why she has come to look the way she does. Her skin is, at least from her perspective, unattractively darkened by exposure to the sun (for a contrary viewpoint, see Pope 1978:322). This state of affairs has been brought about by her brothers, who have forced her to labor in the vineyards. They have so forced her because they were angry with her, but the text does not tell us why. Brothers played a large role in their sisters' marriage arrangements, according to ancient Near Eastern and biblical custom (cf. Gen 34). They may be angry about what they might consider their sister's rather forward relationship with the man (cf. Song8:8–10). (Ibid)

The Early Church Father, **Origen**, demonstrates the ludicrous nature of the allegorical approach which borders on nonsense spiritualizing that the Shulammitte's reference to her being dark means the Church is ugly with sin, but when she says she is **lovely** she is referring to her spiritual beauty after conversion! This type of comment shows allegorical commentaries are only limited by one's imagination.

**Paul Van Gorder** on Song 1:5 - The betrothed said of herself, "I am black, but comely." This appears to be a paradox. How can both be possible at the same time? She describes her appearance as black as "the tents of Kedar." Is this not a picture of the human heart? The intense rays of the oriental sun had darkened her (Song 1:6). But if she exclaims, "I am black," her lover responds, "Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee" (Song 4:7)....The bride exclaims, "I am... comely... like the curtains of

Solomon" (Song 1:5). What beauty this must have been! Although she did not see much in herself (Song 1:6), she had a beauty that was not her own.....The book contains numerous expressions of mutual affection and admiration. Yet it also has several confessions of failure on the part of the bride.....The first four chapters of the Song of Solomon show the lovers basking in each other's love. ([OT Reflections of Christ - Song of Solomon](#))

**Not taken care of my own vineyard** - (cf vineyard in Song 7:12, 8:11). Although this could refer to a literal vineyard, more likely it is a metaphorical way of describing her inability to care for her personal appearance (my own vineyard) by virtue of the fact that she was **caretaker of the vineyards**. Her brothers kept her so busy tending the vineyard, that she had no time to go to the beauty salon!

**HCSB** - Shulammitte explained her darkened appearance as the consequence of her brothers' (my mother's sons) assignment to work outside in vineyards. We later discover they had leased this vineyard from Solomon (Song 8:10-12).

**Daughters of Jerusalem** - This is a common refrain found some 6 times in this book (Song 1:5; 2:7; 3:5; 5:8, 16; 8:4). The identity of these women is not disclosed. Options include friends and companions of the bride, attendants of the King's palace or interested onlookers.

**Brian Bell** - Insecurities! Song 1:5-7 = Though she loves Solomon, she's insecure of her desirability! Someone said insecurity is, "finding on your new job that your name is written on the door in chalk--and there's a wet sponge hanging next to it." How many individuals in marriages feel the same way? I think we all struggle with insecurities! Maxwell Maltz, who wrote Psycho-Cybernetics, estimates that 95% of people in our society have a strong sense of inadequacy. I have no difficulty believing that figure. The only surprise is the other 5%. Why aren't those guys feeling insecure? Note the dichotomy – She saw herself as dark, but lovely. In the presence of the kinb we need to view ourselves the same way! – Dark w/sin on the outside, but quickly reminded forgiven & pure on the inside.. Ro7:18 "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells." 2Cor.4:6,7 "For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us." Christ loves you, no matter what you may see in yourself!

#### Shulammitte (or young woman)

**Song 1:6 "Do not stare at me because I am swarthy (of a dark color, complexion), for the sun has burned me. My mother's sons were angry with me; They made me caretaker of the vineyards ([picture](#)), but I have not taken care of my own vineyard. (Caretaker - Song 8:11,12)**

- **NET Bible** - Do not stare at me because I am dark, for the sun has burned my skin. My brothers were angry with me; they made me the keeper of the vineyards. Alas, my own vineyard I could not keep!
- **NLT** - Don't look down on me, you fair city girls, just because my complexion is so dark. The sun has burned my skin. My brothers were angry with me and sent me out to tend the vineyards in the hot sun. Now see what it has done to me!

**Brian Bell** - Tan was looked down upon – a worker in the sun.

**Longman** adds - The woman's unhappiness with her dark skin has nothing to do with race but rather the artificial coloring of the skin by exposure to the sun. It makes her look like a country bumpkin, a low-class laborer. (Ibid)

#### Shulammitte (or young woman)

**Song 1:7 "Tell (imperative = command) me, O you whom my soul loves, Where do you pasture (feed) your flock, Where do you make it lie down at noon? For why should I be like one who veils herself beside the flocks of your companions?" (O you - Song 2:3 3:1-4 5:8,10,16) (You - Song 1:15 2:10 4:1,7,10 5:9 6:1,4-10 7:1-13)**

- **NET Bible** - Tell me, O you whom my heart loves, where do you pasture your sheep? Where do you rest your sheep during the midday heat? Tell me lest I wander around beside the flocks of your companions!
- **NLT** - Tell me, my love, where are you leading your flock today? Where will you rest your sheep at noon? For why should I wander like a prostitute among your friends and their flocks?

**Where do you pasture your flock** - Here the Shulammitte turns her attention from herself and addresses Solomon. Not only was Solomon a King, he was also a shepherd (Song 1:7-8, 2:16; 6:2-3). In the OT times rulers were also called "shepherds" (Jer 23:4; Ezek 34:23 "My servant David...will...be their shepherd"). Historically Solomon did have many flocks and herds (Eccl. 2:7).

**Whom my soul loves** - This phrase conveys her deep sense of emotional involvement (cf our modern term "soul mates").

**NAB Marginal Note** - Here and elsewhere in the Song (Song 3:1; 5:8; 6:1), the bride expresses her desire to be in the company of her lover. These verses point to a certain tension in the poem. Only at the end (Song 8:5-14) does mutual possession of the lovers become final.

**Longman** - If the man does not give her directions, then she will have to proceed from tent to tent and look like a prostitute who is trying to get a customer. (Ibid)

**One who veils herself** - This phrase has two possible interpretations: (1) It could refer to what a prostitute would do, chasing a man for his favor. (cf Tamar with Judah in Ge 38:14-15) (**NLT** translates it "*For why should I wander like a prostitute among the flocks of your companions?*"). If this is the picture, she is saying she is not a loose woman looking for love in all the wrong places. She clearly wants to find the one to whom she is committed. (2) Alternatively, this picture could describe the Shulammitte woman who veiled herself in mourning because she is missing her beloved.

**Longman** - The NLT rightly understands that the veil is a prostitute's veil in this context (Gen 38:14–15) and so makes the ancient implication clear to the modern reader. An alternate understanding of the line is provided by G. R. Driver (1974) and J. A. Emerton (1993). Preferring the other of the two ancient Semitic roots spelled th as the source of the word otyah, they interpret the phrase as indicating that the woman does not want to be left "picking lice," an expression equivalent to our "twiddling thumbs." The NEB has adopted this reading. (Ibid)

**Brian Bell** - She changes the subject to him. She shows her king is also a shepherd. Some believe here is why they cannot be one in the same. (i.e. a king can't be a shepherd) Jesus was! {David was} He is our Good, Great, & Chief Shepherd! So, where do you feed your flocks? —why should I settle w/your companions? Sometimes we just need the Lord! – "Lord I need you!"

#### **Daughters of Jerusalem (or friends) to the Shulammitte (alternatively others favor this as Solomon speaking)...**

**Song 1:8** "If you yourself do not know, most beautiful among women, **Go forth** (imperative) on the trail of the flock, and **pasture** (feed) (**imperative = command**) your young goats by the tents of the shepherds

- **NET Bible** - If you do not know, O most beautiful of women, simply follow the tracks of my flock, and pasture your little lambs beside the tents of the shepherds.
- **NLT** - If you don't know, O most beautiful woman, follow the trail of my flock, and graze your young goats by the shepherds' tents.

**Most beautiful of women** (cf **most beautiful**, Song 5:9, 6:1) - The NLT introduces this verse as "Young Man", NAS as "bridegroom", while other expositors feel this is not Solomon's response but the daughters of Jerusalem. In short, the intent of this verse is not absolutely clear, some seeing it as a disdainful, sarcastic or ironic comment by the women. On the other hand calling her the most beautiful of women is hardly a harsh statement and favors this statement as coming from Solomon.

**Longman** favors this as the young man and feels that here "we get our first interchange between the young woman and the young man. Indeed, this is the first time that we hear directly from the young man. The woman invites him to an intimate noontime meeting, and he responds with a provocative tease. Her invitation has a playful tone about it as well, with sexually charged overtones. She asks for directions as to where she might meet him at noon and then implies that she would still try to find him anyway. She fears lest she look like a paid woman (a prostitute) who goes out to the shepherds during their breaks in her attempt to find him. The man responds to her question indirectly, leaving an air of mystery, but also implying that he desires her company." (Ibid)

**Reformation Study Bible** - Elsewhere in the Song this form of address is used only by the "daughters of Jerusalem" (Song 5:9; 6:1) If the speakers here are the same "daughters of Jerusalem" whose critical stares were referred to in Song 1:6, their attitude seems to have changed. More likely, however, their words here are sarcastic (Song 5:8, 9). ([Song of Solomon](#))

**Beautiful** (03303) (**yapheh**) is an adjective meaning lovely, beautiful, describing beauty of women (Ge 12:11, 14, 2Sa 13:1, Esther 2:7). Good looking or handsome men (2Sa 14:25). Jerusalem was described as "**beautiful** in elevation." A beautiful voice (Ezek 33:32). And one of my favorite verses...

He has made everything **appropriate (beautiful)** in its time. He has also set eternity in their heart, yet so that

man will not find out the work which God has done from the beginning even to the end. (Eccl 3:11) (Listen to this great song [In His Time](#))

**Lxx** translates **yapheh** with the Greek adjective **kalos (word study)** which means good; beautiful, applied by the Greeks to everything so distinguished in form, excellence, goodness, usefulness, as to be pleasing; hence (according to the context) equivalent to "beautiful, handsome, excellent, eminent, choice, surpassing, precious, useful, suitable, commendable, admirable"; a beautiful to look at, shapely, magnificent.

**Yapheh** - 38x/38v (Note 11/38 uses are in Song of Solomon) - Gen 12:11, 14; 29:17; 39:6; 41:2, 4, 18; Deut 21:11; 1 Sa 16:12; 17:42; 25:3; 2Sa 13:1; 14:25, 27; 1Kgs 1:3, 4; Esther 2:7; Job 42:15; Ps 48:2; Pr 11:22; Eccl 3:11; 5:18; Song 1:8, 15, 16; 2:10, 13; 4:1, 7; 5:9; 6:1, 4, 10; Jer 11:16; Ezek 31:3, 9; 33:32; Amos 8:13. **Translated in NAS as** - appropriate(1), beautiful(28), beautiful one(2), fair(1), fitting(1), handsome(4), sleek(3).

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**TODAY IN THE WORD:** In its July 1, 2003, issue, Harper's Bazaar asked supermodel Iman what aging meant to her. "Wisdom. Knowledge. And gravity! Working against you!" she replied. "Since I wasn't raised in the West, I don't have that deep-rooted fear of getting old. But age is more accepted here today. Women over 35, 40, 50, 60 are considered beautiful. It wasn't that way when I arrived. People were so worried about wrinkles, and I couldn't understand what this obsession with age was."

Is age the enemy of beauty? The answer depends upon what you understand beauty to be. Physical beauty, the writer of Proverbs warns, is fleeting (Pr. 31:30). Lasting beauty is reflected in character and wisdom. It is a matter of the "inner self" (1 Peter 3:4). True beauty is created when character and life experience meet. To paraphrase Iman, it is the result of the combination of wisdom, knowledge, and gravity. Not the force of gravity that causes our bodies to sag and our muscles to droop, but the gravity that comes from many years of applying faith to life's challenges.

We are like the bride in today's reading, who has been marked by the things she has suffered. Forced by her brothers to work in their vineyard, her skin was darkened by the sun. Yet these experiences have only contributed to her beauty. Likewise, God uses suffering to enhance the beauty of Christ's bride. Suffering, according to the apostle Paul, can teach us to persist in our faith. Persisting in faith and obedience produces Christlike character within us (Ro 5:3-5).

This is why James 1:2 tells us that we should consider it "pure joy" when we face trials. It is not because we enjoy trouble. No one enjoys suffering, not even Jesus (cf. Matt. 26:39). The joy that James describes springs from our knowledge of what such trials will produce.

Think of a time when God helped you to face a trial with faith and obedience. How did the experience change you? Can you think of any specific dimensions of "spiritual beauty" that were added to your character as a result of your suffering?

#### **Solomon (or young man) speaks...**

**Song 1:9** "To me, my darling, you are like My mare among the chariots of Pharaoh (picture -2) . (my - Song 2:2,10,13 4:1,7 5:2 6:4)  
**10** "Your cheeks are lovely with ornaments, Your neck with strings of beads." (Neck - Song 4:9)

#### **Daughters of Jerusalem (or friends) to the Shulammite...**

**Song 1:11** "We will make for you ornaments of gold With beads of silver." (Song 8:9)

#### **Shulammite (or young woman) speaks...**

**Song 1:12** "While the king was at his table, my perfume gave forth its fragrance. (King - Song 7:5, Song 4:13-16)

**13** "My beloved is to me a pouch of [myrrh \(note\)](#) (aka. "spikenard") Which lies all night between my breasts.

**14** "My beloved is to me a cluster of henna blossoms In the vineyards of [En Gedi \(note\)](#)." ([Picture of](#))

#### **Solomon (or young man) speaks...**

**Song 1:9** "To me, my darling, you are like my mare among the chariots of Pharaoh (picture -2) . (my - Song 2:2,10,13 4:1,7 5:2 6:4)

**AS BEAUTIFUL AS A MARE!**

Song 1:9-11

- **NET Bible** - O my beloved, you are like a mare among Pharaoh's stallions.
- **NLT** - You are as exciting, my darling, as a mare among Pharaoh's stallions.

**My darling** - As discussed in the notes on Song 1:8, there is some question about the identity of the speaker in that verse, but such is not the case in the present passage, for now Solomon praises his beloved. The Hebrew word [ra'yah \(07474 - רעייה\)](#) is translated **darling** (dearest, love) and occurs nine times in the Song of Solomon (Song 1:9; 1:15; 2:2; 2:10; 2:13; 4:1; 4:7; 5:2; 6:4), every use being **by Solomon** to address the Shulammitte woman. The root meaning of ra'yah is associate, companion or friend.

**Brian Bell** - She's likened unto the choicest of Pharaohs eye-turning horses! They were beautiful displayed (Dog-shows: Doberman w/Listerine) So great is our darkness, yet Jesus actually desires me...Great is the mystery!

**My mare** - Now Solomon inserts a surprising simile, comparing the Shulammitte to **amare** which was a reference to her strength, graceful movement, and beauty, which was a "positive" comment from Solomon who loved horses (cf 1Kings 4:26). Furthermore, a horse in the Near Eastern culture was a cherished companion and not a beast of burden. In addition, stallions and not mares would pull a chariot of Pharaoh ("among the chariots..."). The presence of a **mare** among stallions in fact would be the ultimate distraction, and so in an indirect way Solomon pays the Shulammitte an ultimate compliment regarding her sexual attractiveness!

**Longman** on the metaphor of a **mare** - The metaphor, as applied to the woman, implies that her beauty is overwhelming and distracting. She drives him crazy with love. In the next verse, he comments further on her beauty, framed as it is by jewelry; and then, finally, in 1:11, he makes known his intention to honor her with precious earrings, further enhancing her beauty. (Ibid)

**HCSB** (on Song 1:10) -Archaeological drawings show jewels decorating bridles of horses, so the imagery of jewels on the cheeks and in necklaces likely extends the metaphor of the mare.

**Ryrie** - My mare. The height of flattery for Solomon, a lover of horses (1 Kings 4:26).

**Constable** has a helpful note - Here Solomon reassured his love. Stallions, not mares, pulled chariots. A mare among the best of Pharaoh's stallions would have been desirable to every one of them. "A passage from Egyptian literature demonstrates that mares were sometimes set loose in battle to allure and distract the pharaoh's chariot-harnessed stallions." (Parsons) Solomon meant his love was a woman whom all the best men of his court would have pursued. "This is the ultimate in sex appeal!" (Carr) Solomon's praise would have bolstered his beloved's confidence that he loved her. This encouragement is often necessary and is always appropriate in such a relationship. "We have forgotten what a thing of beauty a horse can be when compared to other animals. We are also unaware what valuable creatures they were in the ancient world. They were beautiful in themselves, and the ancient royal courts insisted on brilliantly caparisoning [adorning with rich trappings] the ones that pulled the king's chariot. The beloved's jewelry, earrings, and necklaces make him think of such." (Kinlaw) "Such a comparison was not at all unusual in ancient literature. Theocritus, for example, compared 'the rose complexioned Helen' to a 'Thessalian steed.' For Solomon the horse was more a cherished companion than a beast of burden. His praise of Shulamith recognized her beauty and her graceful movements." (Patterson) ([Song of Solomon Commentary](#))

**Temper Longman** - So what does a reference to a mare among Pharaoh's chariots signify? Modern commentators (see Pope 1978:336–341) understand the metaphor to be built on an ancient military defensive strategy. As chariots attacked, the defenders would let a mare loose, and the hope was that the charging stallions would be distracted and thrown into confusion. The metaphor, as applied to the woman, implies that her beauty is overwhelming and distracting. She drives him crazy with love. In the next verse, he comments further on her beauty, framed as it is by jewelry; and then, finally, in Song 1:11, he makes known his intention to honor her with precious earrings, further enhancing her beauty. (Cornerstone Biblical Commentary-Song of Songs)

### Solomon (or young man) speaks...

**Song 1:10 "Your cheeks are lovely with ornaments, your neck with strings of beads." (Neck - Song 4:9)**

**NET Bible** - Your cheeks are beautiful with ornaments; your neck is lovely with strings of jewels.

**NLT** - How lovely are your cheeks; your earrings set them afire! How lovely is your neck, enhanced by a string of jewels.

**Carr** explains that "The bridles of the chariot horses (Song 1:9) were elaborately decorated with jewels, precious metals, feathers and multicolored leathers and fabrics. The lover transfers to his beloved the image of this decorated beauty. The beauty of her face (cheeks) is enhanced by the ornaments surrounding it." (TCOT)

### Daughters of Jerusalem (or friends) to the Shulammite...

Song 1:11 "We will make for you ornaments of gold with beads of silver." (Song 8:9)

- **NET Bible** - We will make for you gold ornaments studded with silver.
- **NLT** -We will make for you earrings of gold and beads of silver. Young Woman

**Reformation Study Bible** on we - In Song 1:4 the "daughters of Jerusalem" echo the girl's praise of her lover; here they respond similarly to his praise of her. The plural subject "**we**" goes against taking this verse as a speech of the girl's lover using courtly language. The so-called "royal we" is not used in ancient Near Eastern literature. ([RSB Study Note](#))

**Brian Bell** - The chorus agrees with him about her beauty by offering to make jewelry for her.

**Carr** - The word for **ornaments** is the one used above in Song 1:10, but these are designed especially for her, made of gold and silver, and perhaps decorated with jewels or small globes of glass. The emphasis in these last two verses is not on the attractiveness of the ornaments, magnificent as they are, but on the way these enhance the girl's natural beauty. (Tyndale OT Commentary)

### Shulammite (or young woman) speaks...

Song 1:12 "While the king was at his table, my perfume (KJV = spikenard) gave forth its fragrance. (King - Song 7:5, Song 4:13-16)

## INTIMATE FRAGRANCES

Song 1:12-14

- **NET Bible** - While the king was at his banqueting table, my nard gave forth its fragrance.
- **NLT** - The king is lying on his couch, enchanted by the fragrance of my perfume.

**The king** - Second of five references (Song 1:4, 12, 3:9, 11, 7:5) (see [RSB Study Note](#))

**Carr** comments on the fragrances she mentions - In all probability, she was not in actual possession of any of these items. Rather, they are similes that express her sweet feelings towards her lover.

**The king was at his table** - Up to this point the context has been predominantly pastoral (flocks, vineyards, etc) but now it moves to a royal setting, presumably in Solomon's palace. Solomon the "shepherd" is also Solomon the king. Indeed this is not at all unusual as in this day, kings were not uncommonly referred to as shepherds (cf Jehovah's designation of Cyrus of Persia as "My shepherd").

**Table** ([04524 - תִּבּוֹן](#)) (**mecab**) literally means around, round thing, round about, that which surrounds and is used both of tables and couches. The wealthy and monarchs often dined while reclining on couches that were arranged around the perimeter of a room. This noun is used only 4 times in the OT. Here in Song 1:12 **mecab** is translated in the Lxx with the noun anaklisis which means lying or leaning back at a table

1 Kings 6:29 Then he carved all the walls of the house **round about** with carved engravings of cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers, inner and outer sanctuaries.

2 Kings 23:5 He did away with the idolatrous priests whom the kings of Judah had appointed to burn incense in the high places in the cities of Judah and in the **surrounding area** of Jerusalem, also those who burned incense to Baal, to the sun and to the moon and to the constellations and to all the host of heaven.

Job 37:12 "It **changes direction**, turning around by His guidance, That it may do whatever He commands it On the face of the inhabited earth.

Song of Solomon 1:12 "While the king was at his **table**, My perfume gave forth its fragrance.

**HCSB** - One may also translate **on his couch** ("at his table" NAS) as "in his realm," similar to its meaning in 1Ki 6:29 and 2Ki 23:5 ("surrounding"), the only other times this phrase appears in the OT.

**Reformation Study Bible** - The Hebrew here is an unusual expression, lit. "in his surroundings." The surroundings are not a table, but grass and trees (As determined from context of Song 1:16, 17). The girl is thinking of the times she and her lover spend alone

in the woods. ([Study Note](#))

**Perfume ([Spikenard - see picture](#))** - The spikenard or perfume (nard) was an expensive ointment imported from India where it was extracted from a plant native to the Himalayas. Because of its great cost and the young woman's working-class background, it is likely that it was a gift from the king. If the young woman had purchased it for herself, it would have been at a great sacrifice and was probably her most valuable possession. She honored her beloved by wearing it in his presence, for his enjoyment. The honor was even greater if it was purchased with her limited resources. (POSB)

**Longman** - she refers to nard, an exotic perfume derived from far-away India. This is her perfume, the scent of which wafts to the man as he lies on a couch, a sensuous scene, to be sure. (Ibid)

**Brian Bell** - A Beautiful Fragrance! = Song 1:12-14 - She goes back to telling how intoxicating her love is for him. Like the most enticing of perfumes. What perfume do you give off at His table (communion)? One day at Solomon's table = 1Kings 4:22,23!

**POSB** - The Couple's Courtship—A Period of Strong Sexual Desire but Great Restraint: A Picture of Preparing for a Godly Marriage, Song 1:1–5:1 Courtship (Part 2): A Time for Growing Together and Cultivating Love, Song 1:12–3:5 Introduction: every couple holds treasured memories from their courtship. Years later, they delight in recalling scenes from dates and special moments spent together. Often, women keep scrapbooks holding everything from photos to ticket stubs and even napkins from very special occasions. Notes and love letters are sometimes stored away in simple boxes for a lifetime. Throughout this division of the Song of Solomon, Scripture reveals special moments and occasions from the courtship of the young woman and young man. Events and scenes from their dating days—particularly those immediately before their union—display their passion and delight in one another and the foundations of their relationship. Their relationship is not built on mere emotion and feelings, but on mutual respect, honor, and commitment. Their growing excitement and devotion to one another are witnessed as their wedding day approaches. While expressing their desires, they also express their commitment to keep themselves sexually pure until their marriage. As their anticipation of being together grows, so does their love and loyalty to one another. This is, Courtship: A Time for Growing Together and Cultivating Love, Song 1:12–3:5. (1:12–2:7) The young woman and king cultivated love through respect. The fact that these two young sweethearts held each other in high regard is obvious from the feelings, words, and actions recorded in the Song. This section is a compilation of several memorable scenes from their courtship. Parallel statements show some exchanges of their love being bantered about. Other verses reveal the young woman's affections and dreams that she revealed to her friends. She honored the king (Song 1:12-14). The young woman's esteem for her beloved is revealed in this first sequence (Song 1:12-14). As she dined with the king, she became very aware of the pleasing aroma of her own perfume. She then began to think of him as the fragrance of her life and expressed her feelings in romantic terms.

### Shulammitte (or young woman) speaks...

**Song 1:13 "My beloved is to me a pouch of [myrrh \(note\)](#) (aka. "spikenard") Which lies all night between my breasts.**

- **NET Bible** - My beloved is like a fragrant pouch of myrrh spending the night between my breasts.
- **NLT** - My lover is like a sachet of myrrh lying between my breasts.

**My beloved** - The Shulammitte calls Solomon "**my beloved**" (Hebrew = [dod/dowd - Strong's = 1730](#), first use in Song 1:2 "your love" -- [click for all 32 uses](#)). These verses and the entire book for that matter are among other things a divine testimonial to God's approval on the physical--as well as the emotional and spiritual--aspects of marital love. God created Adam and Eve for each other, and Christ endorsed the lifelong union of husband and wife (Genesis 2:18, 21-24; Matthew 19:3-6).

**EBC** adds that "In this section the maiden's pet name for her lover--[dodi](#)—appears for the first time (v.13). This is translated variously (NIV, "my lover"; NEB, "my love"; RSV and JB, "my beloved"). Apparently this word best expressed her joy in him. She uses it twenty-seven times as she speaks to him or about him. Five times it is used by the women of Jerusalem as they speak of him. Four additional occurrences are in the **plural** (Song 1:2, 1:4; 4:10; 7:12). In each case it seems best, as Carr suggests, to translate the plural form as "**love-making**." ([Gaebelein, F. Editor: Expositor's Bible Commentary OT](#))

**My beloved** - 24x in 23v - Song 1:13, 14, 16; 2:3, 8, 9, 10, 16, 17; 4:16; 5:2, 4, 5, 6 (twice), Song 5:8, 10, 16; 6:2, 3; 7:9, 11, 13; 8:14. (There are only 2 other uses in the OT - Isaiah 5:1, Jeremiah 11:15).

**A pouch of [myrrh...between my breasts](#)** - Notice again the appeal to the senses of both sight and smell, as the Shulammitte depicts the impact of her beloved upon her person. Notice that the location of the sachet conveys the idea of intimacy. He is as close as he can be.

**Myrrh** a resinous gum from trees in Arabia, Abyssinia and India, was very fragrant and quite expensive (highly prized in the ancient world and thus a valuable article for trading) and was even used as a "love charm" in the ancient Near East (cf Pr 7:17), as incense in the worship of Jehovah (Ex 30:23), for perfuming garments of special people (Ps 45:8), for preparing girls for visits with Oriental kings (Esther 2:12), and for embalming corpses (John 19:39).

**Myrrh** was derived from the gum of an Arabian balsam tree. It was used as a perfume, as a deodorant, in incense, as an anesthetic, and for embalming. Women commonly bundled it into a small pouch and wore it as an aromatic necklace. In comparing the young man to this aromatic necklace, the Shulamite was declaring that he was the beautiful, pleasing fragrance of her life, and that she carried him constantly close to her heart.

**Carr** - Myrrh was a major ingredient in the holy oil used in the tabernacle (Ex. 30:23–33), and was also traditionally associated with death and the embalming process (cf. Mt. 2:11; Mk 15:23; Jn 19:39). In liquid form it would be carried in small bottles like nard, but it was also used in solid form. This way it could be carried in a small cloth pouch or sachet and worn next to the body. The Egyptian 'Song of the Harper' mentions placing myrrh on the head as a sign of rejoicing. The myrrh was mixed with fat, shaped into cones, and placed on the heads of the guests. As the fat melted from the body heat, the aroma of the myrrh and the anointing oil would fill the room. (Ibid)

**Which lies all night between my breasts** - Here the Shulamite alludes to the common practice in which women wore a scent bag or pouch of perfume suspended from their neck on a silk thread.

**EBC** comments that "The impact of the girl's lover on her is encompassing and inescapable. Her consciousness of him sweetens her life the way the aroma of a sachet of perfume placed between the breasts makes a girl move in a cloud of fragrance. The thought or sight of him is as pleasant as the aroma wafted from a field of henna blossoms. Love has its own hallowing touch on all of life. (Ibid)

The **UBS Handbook on the Song of Songs** has an interesting note writing that...

TEV (The English Version) suggests "My lover has the scent of myrrh as he lies upon my breasts," but this is slightly misleading. The point of the metaphor does not seem to be how pleasant the lover smells, but rather that he is "lodged between" her breasts, like her sachet, staying close to her all night. We can translate as:

- My beloved, like a sachet of perfume, sleeps the night on my breast.

If a reference to the breasts must be avoided, we can say:

- My lover spends the night close to me like a sachet of sweet-smelling perfume [on my chest].
- My lover is like a sweet sachet sleeping close to me all the night.

### Shulamite (or young woman) speaks...

Song 1:14 "My beloved is to me a cluster of henna blossoms in the vineyards of **En Gedi** (note). " (Picture of)

- **NET Bible** - My beloved is like a cluster of henna blossoms in the vineyards of En-Gedi.
- **NLT** - He is like a bouquet of sweet henna blossoms from the vineyards of En-gedi.

The Shulamite's **beloved** is like the beautiful, fragrant **henna** blossoms which were beautiful yellow-white blossoms that gave off a delightful odor and thus were often used for their fragrance or even as an ornament. The Shulamite's picture was of her beloved Solomon as one who is vibrant, alive and refreshing like an oasis in a desert.

**Cluster of henna blossoms in the vineyards of Engedi** - **Engedi** (picture) is a lush, lovely oasis district of gardens and vineyards located below a plateau just west of and overlooking the Dead Sea. It is the wayfarer's delight to come into this beautiful scenery. Archaeological explorations indicate that a significant perfume business was located at Engedi. "Just as in Song 1:9, where Pharaoh's horses were the best, so here, the produce from Engedi is the best of the best. The girl returns her lover's compliments in terms of the best she knows." (Carr)

**HCSB** - While Solomon was away and about his realm, Shulamite's thoughts about him were as evocative as myrrh. Engedi was an oasis in the desert.

**Brian Bell** on **henna** – rose scented, pink-flowered shrub – leaves are powdered & made into paste. Used: color finger/toe nails; tips of fingers; on men's beards, mains 7 tails of horses, even the souls of girls feet.



**POSB (Henna)** - henna blossoms grew on a common shrub throughout the Palestinian region. Notice that the young man was not like any ordinary henna bush. The yellow and white blossoms paint a picture of an extraordinary, multi-sensory delight.

**Temper Longman** - She likens the man to a cluster of henna blossoms, another reference to a sensual fragrance. Furthermore, these are not ordinary hennas but hennas from the most romantic place in all of Israel, En-gedi. En-gedi may still be visited today. Located on the western bank of the Dead Sea, it is an oasis in the middle of desolate wilderness. It has a well, a secluded waterfall, and is filled with lush vegetation—the perfect place for a romantic tryst. (Ibid)

**Carr on Engedi** - All sorts of tropical and semi-tropical plants grow there. Historically, the major crops of the area were exotic spices and plants that were manufactured into cosmetics and perfumes. Just as in Song 1:9, where Pharaoh's horses were the best, so here, the produce from En-gedi is the best of the best. The girl returns her lover's compliments in terms of the best she knows. (TCOT)

**POSB on Engedi - Engedi** is to this day a tropical delight in the midst of a barren, desert wilderness. This sparkling oasis with its lush vegetation, waterfall (the only one in Israel), pools, and cool caves can be compared to a popular vacation spot. It was a welcome sight to those who journeyed through the region. "The king was like Engedi to this girl, an oasis of life in a desert of monotony, and like a weary traveler she found refreshment with him." ([Glickman](#))

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**TODAY IN THE WORD:** Actress Elizabeth Taylor is known for her love of diamond jewelry. On one occasion she was attending a social event where one of the guests pointed out the large diamond she was wearing. "That's a bit vulgar," the woman remarked. Taylor offered to let the woman try the ring on. As the woman gazed at the diamond on her own finger, Taylor commented, "There, it's not so vulgar now, is it?"

Is it wrong for us to use cosmetics and jewelry to enhance our appearance? Christians disagree on this point. Several New Testament passages warn believers not to make outward appearance the primary focus of their beauty. In 1 Timothy 2:9–10, for example, the apostle Paul says that he wants women to "dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God."

The apostle Peter makes a similar point, reminding his readers that the primary source of their beauty does not lie in expensive jewelry or fine clothing, but in character. This was how the holy women of the past made themselves beautiful (1 Peter 3:4–5).

The primary point in these passages is positive rather than negative. We can see that it's appropriate to take steps to enhance our physical appearance—the groom in today's reading expresses his appreciation for the bride's efforts to beautify herself. In particular, he mentions earrings of gold studded with silver and a necklace of fine jewelry. In her response, the bride adds perfume to the list of items.

It is clear from today's passage that the bride has taken time and effort to beautify herself for her groom. (Today in the Word)

#### **Solomon (or young man) speaks...**

**Song 1:15** "How beautiful you are, my darling, How beautiful you are! Your eyes are like doves."

#### **Shulammitte (or young woman) speaks...**

**Song 1:16** "How handsome you are, my beloved, And so pleasant! Indeed, our couch is luxuriant!

**1:17** "The beams of our houses are cedars, Our rafters, cypresses."

#### **Solomon (or young man) speaks...**

**Song 1:15** "How beautiful you are, my darling, how beautiful you are! Your eyes are *like* doves."

### **MUTUAL ADMIRATION**

Song 1:15-17

- **NET Bible** - Oh, how beautiful you are, my beloved! Oh, how beautiful you are! Your eyes are like doves!
- **NLT** - How beautiful you are, my darling, how beautiful! Your eyes are like doves.

**My darling** - Picking up from Song 1:9 which also compared her with an animal (compare similar comparisons in Song 5:13-15,

Song 7:2-3).

**POSB** - This is the second of nine times in the Song that Solomon refers to the Shulamite as **darling** (ra'yah). Obviously, this was his preferred term of endearment for her. It is a word that refers to an associate or companion. Solomon's use of it throughout the Song shows how delighted he was that she was to be his life partner. (The Preacher's Outline and Sermon Bible – Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon)

**Carr** observes that Song 1:15-2:2 "are a series of rapid, bantering exchanges between the two that leads into the girl's monologue in Song 2:3-13."

**Beautiful...beautiful** - Note that the young man doesn't just say she is beautiful once but twice, indicating his ardor for her! Exactly what this simile of eyes like doves is meant to describe in terms of her beauty is uncertain (Is he saying her eyes are a beautiful shade of gray?) Whatever the intent clearly to him her eyes were beautiful about which **Carr** comments "Beautiful eyes were a hallmark of perfection in a woman (cf. Rachel and Leah, Ge. 29:17). Rabbinic tradition identifies beautiful eyes with a beautiful personality. Cf. Song 2:12, 14."

**POSB** - The repetition of how fair or beautiful she was expresses his utter awe of her loveliness. Seminary president David A. Hubbard comments that "the Hebrew word for 'behold' [KJV] ought sometimes to be translated 'Wow!' Song 1:15-16 may be such instances." Solomon's statement might be paraphrased in modern language this way: "You are beautiful....Wow, are you beautiful!"

**Beautiful** (03303) (**yapheh**) is an adjective meaning lovely, beautiful, describing beauty of women (Ge 12:11, 14, 2Sa 13:1, Esther 2:7). Good looking or handsome men (2Sa 14:25). Jerusalem was described as "**beautiful** in elevation." A beautiful voice (Ezek 33:32). And one of my favorite verses...

He has made everything **appropriate** (**beautiful**) in its time. He has also set eternity in their heart, yet so that man will not find out the work which God has done from the beginning even to the end. (Eccl 3:11) (Listen to this great song [In His Time](#))

**Lxx** translates **yapheh** with the Greek adjective **kalos** (**word study**) which means good; beautiful, applied by the Greeks to everything so distinguished in form, excellence, goodness, usefulness, as to be pleasing; hence (according to the context) equivalent to "beautiful, handsome, excellent, eminent, choice, surpassing, precious, useful, suitable, commendable, admirable"; a beautiful to look at, shapely, magnificent.

**Yapheh** - 38x/38v (Note 11/38 uses are in Song of Solomon) - Gen 12:11, 14; 29:17; 39:6; 41:2, 4, 18; Deut 21:11; 1 Sa 16:12; 17:42; 25:3; 2Sa 13:1; 14:25, 27; 1Kgs 1:3, 4; Esther 2:7; Job 42:15; Ps 48:2; Pr 11:22; Eccl 3:11; 5:18; Song 1:8, 15, 16; 2:10, 13; 4:1, 7; 5:9; 6:1, 4, 10; Jer 11:16; Ezek 31:3, 9; 33:32; Amos 8:13. **Translated in NAS as** - appropriate(1), beautiful(28), beautiful one(2), fair(1), fitting(1), handsome(4), sleek(3).

**Darling** (07474)(**rayah** - רַעִיָּה) refers to one's companion and is used only in Song 1:9, 15; 2:2, 10, 13; 4:1, 7; 5:2; 6:4. Song 2:2 Like a Every use is translated in the Lxx with the adverb **plesion** Song 2:2 Like a which means near or close and in the NT is used to describe a neighbor (as one near) (Mt 5:43). BDAG helps us get a sense of Solomon's use of darling in that **plesion** Song 2:2 Like a is a "marker of a position quite close to another position."

**POSB** on **rayah** - It is a word that refers to an associate or companion. Solomon's use of it throughout the Song shows how delighted he was that she was to be his life partner.

**Eyes are like doves** - This looks like a **simile** (comparison) but given that the word "**like**" is added in the translation, it is more accurately termed a **metaphor**. As noted above, the exact intent is uncertain, but it is clearly a compliment. Doves in Scripture speak of innocence (cf Jesus' exhortation in Mt 10:16 to be "innocent as doves"), without mixture of deceit. Doves are small birds characterized by a tranquil character and symbolic of gentleness or softness. (See [RSB Note](#))

**Carr** surmises that "most probably the comparison is to the deep, smoke-grey colour with flashes of iridescence."

**POSB** - This striking image against the contrast of the young woman's dark skin is one of unusual, exotic beauty. Other commentators interpret the comparison to the purity and innocence reflected in her eyes, or to their peaceful softness. Rabbinic teaching emphasized beautiful eyes as a sign of beautiful character. Tremper Longman duly notes, "Indeed, perhaps we are missing a cultural background to [the significance of] this image, but from the context we can be certain that the metaphor is a compliment."

**Lehrman** adds that "According to Rabbinic teaching, a bride who has beautiful eyes possesses a beautiful character; they are an index to her character. (Lehrman, S. M. "The Song of Songs." In The Five Megilloth. London: Soncino Press)

The Hebrew word for **dove** ([yownah](#) - [Strong's = 3123](#)) is found 6 times in Song of Solomon (two other times referring to her

eyes)...

**Song 1:15** - "How beautiful you are, my darling, How beautiful you are! Your eyes are like **doves** ."

**Song 2:14** - "O my **dove**, in the clefts of the rock, In the secret place of the steep pathway, Let me see your form, Let me hear your voice; For your voice is sweet, And your form is lovely ."

**Song 4:1** - "How beautiful you are, my darling, How beautiful you are! Your eyes are like **doves** behind your veil; Your hair is like a flock of goats That have descended from Mount Gilead.

**Song 5:2** - "I was asleep but my heart was awake. A voice! My beloved was knocking: 'Open to me, my sister, my darling, My **dove**, my perfect one! For my head is drenched with dew, My locks with the damp of the night .'

**Song 5:12** - "His eyes are like **doves** Beside streams of water, Bathed in milk, And reposed in their setting.

**Song 6:9** - But my **dove**, my perfect one, is unique: She is her mother's only daughter; She is the pure child of the one who bore her. The maidens saw her and called her blessed, The queens and the concubines also, and they praised her, saying,

Song 2:2 Like a **Brian Bell's** sermon notes on Song 1:15 = How He views us! He then tells her how beautiful she is. Not fair/so-so, not average, but Excellent, ravishing, wonderful,...Note everything he says to her is positive & encouraging. And that's the way the Lord sees us (his betrothed)!

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**Today in the Word - Song 1:15** - In the movie Shrek, Fiona is a princess who has been the victim of an evil spell that removes her beauty at sunset and turns her into an ogre. When the sun goes down, she loses her slim figure and attractive face and is transformed into a monster. Only when she finds true love is the curse finally broken and she turns into . . . an ogre? Permanently? This twist on a traditional fairy tale suggests that Fiona wanted to be loved not merely for her beautiful exterior but for the beauty she possessed within.

In our text today the man speaks to the woman, this young field worker whose skin is darkened from a life of toil. To him, she is beautiful, and his words must have been thrilling to her heart. Here is someone who adored her, inside and out. He uses vivid metaphors, word pictures, to describe her beauty in detail, "I liken you, my darling, to . . ." (v. 9).

While modern readers may find it unappealing to be compared to a "mare" (v. 9) or doves (v. 15), these were compliments of beauty for that day. The greater point is that the man takes time and care to describe his beloved in such detail. He sees her completely and loves every part of her: "How beautiful you are, my darling! Oh, how beautiful!" (v. 15). She responds likewise, "How handsome you are, my beloved! Oh, how charming!" (v. 16).

The beginnings of love are filled with words of adoration. While the Song of Songs describes a love affair between two people, for centuries many interpreters have seen reminders of God's love for His people. He sees us completely and finds us each uniquely beautiful. With God, we are fully known and fully loved.

Apply the Word - Look in a mirror. Do you love what you see? Few of us feel completely enamored with our appearance. Yet what you see is God's unique creation. Listen today to the way you speak about yourself. Be careful not to mock or put down your own looks. After all, you are wonderfully and beautifully made by God. And you are fully and completely loved. Song 2:2 Like a

### **Shulammitte (or young woman) speaks...**

**Song 1:16 "How handsome you are, my beloved, and so pleasant! Indeed, our couch is luxuriant!"**

- **NET Bible** - Oh, how handsome you are, my lover! Oh, how delightful you are! The lush foliage is our canopied bed;
- **NLT** - You are so handsome, my love, pleasing beyond words! The soft grass is our bed;

Song 2:2 Like a POSB draws our attention to the exact parallelism (phrases below from KJV)...

Song 2:2 Like a Note the exact parallelism in their sentiments:

Song 2:2 Like a You "are fair [beautiful]"= you "are fair [handsome]"

Song 2:2 Like a "How beautiful you are" = "How handsome you are"

Song 2:2 Like a "My love" = "My beloved"

Song 2:2 Like a You "are fair" = You are "pleasant"

**How handsome your are** - Same Hebrew phrase as Song 15, but translated "handsome" since it is speaking of Solomon. Note the list of 14 uses below -- all the other uses refer to the Shulammitte.

My beloved - specific phrase "**my beloved**" occurs 24x in 23v - Song 1:13, 14, 16; 2:3, 8, 9, 10, 16, 17; 4:16; 5:2, 4, 5, 6 (twice), Song 5:8, 10, 16; 6:2, 3; 7:9, 11, 13; 8:14. (There are only 2 other uses in the entire OT - Isaiah 5:1, Jeremiah 11:15).

**Our couch is luxuriant** - Our divan is verdant, new, prosperous, flourishing. This speaks of an intimate location. Note that they are not indoors but outdoors with a bed of grass that is surrounded by trees (Song 1:17). It is as private as if they were in a house.

Note the rapid fire exchange between the lovers (Solomon - Song 1:15 "**beautiful**", Shulamite - Song 1:16-17 "**handsome**", 2:1; Solomon - Song 2:2; Shulamite - 2:3-7) as their expressions of love take on an increasing intensity.

**Handsome** ([03303](#)) (**yapheh** - **see more complete definition**) is an adjective and is the same Hebrew word translated **beautiful** (**yapheh**), except that here it is the masculine form. Dear husband. Dear wife. Can we not learn something from their interchange? Beauty truly is in the eye of the beholder and real beauty is an inner beauty. What would happen to our marriages if husbands and wives told each other (not in a patronizing way but with sincerity of heart) more often they were beautiful or handsome?!

This adjective [yapheh](#) is used more in Song of Solomon than any other book...

**Song 1:8** - "If you yourself do not know, Most **beautiful** among women, Go forth on the trail of the flock And pasture your young goats By the tents of the shepherds."

**Song 1:15** - "How **beautiful** you are, my darling, How beautiful you are! Your eyes are like doves ."

**Song 1:16** - "How **handsome** you are, my beloved, And so pleasant! Indeed, our couch is luxuriant!"

**Song 2:10** - "My beloved responded and said to me, 'Arise, my darling, my **beautiful** one, And come along."

**Song 2:13** - "The fig tree has ripened its figs, And the vines in blossom have given forth their fragrance. Arise, my darling, my **beautiful** one, And come along!"

**Song 4:1** - "How **beautiful** you are, my darling, How beautiful you are! Your eyes are like doves behind your veil; Your hair is like a flock of goats That have descended from Mount Gilead."

**Song 4:7** - "You are altogether **beautiful**, my darling, And there is no blemish in you."

**Song 5:9** - "What kind of beloved is your beloved, O most **beautiful** among women? What kind of beloved is your beloved, That thus you adjure us?"

**Song 6:1** - "Where has your beloved gone, O most **beautiful** among women? Where has your beloved turned, That we may seek him with you?"

**Song 6:4** - "You are as **beautiful** as Tirzah, my darling, As lovely as Jerusalem, As awesome as an army with banners."

**Song 6:10** - "Who is this that grows like the dawn, As **beautiful** as the full moon, As pure as the sun, As awesome as an army with banners ?"

**Song 1:16 pleasant** - Is a Hebrew word that pertains to being acceptable and favorable is used of persons who are pleasing and a joy to be around. Solomon had a charming manner about him. This same word is used to describe David...

Now these are the last words of David. David the son of Jesse declares, And the man who was raised on high declares, The anointed of the God of Jacob, And the **sweet** (pleasant) psalmist of Israel (2Sa 23:1)

**My beloved** - This specific phrase is found 24x in 23v in the Song of Solomon - Song 1:13, 14, 16; 2:3, 8, 9, 10, 16, 17; 4:16; 5:2, 4, 5, 6 (twice), Song 5:8, 10, 16; 6:2, 3; 7:9, 11, 13; 8:14. (There are only 2 other uses in the OT - Isaiah 5:1, Jeremiah 11:15).

**Beloved** (01730) (**dod**) means beloved, loved one. 32 of 53 OT uses are found in the Song of Solomon. **Dod** conveys three thoughts (1) the name or address given by one lover to another (Song 5:4, 6:3, 7:9); (2) Love, where it speaks of the adulteress (Pr 7:18) and in a positive sense of the love between Solomon and the Shulammitte (Song 1:2, 4:10). Love is used symbolically of Jerusalem reaching the "age for love" (Ezek 16:8). **Dod** speaks of the adultery of Jerusalem in Ezek 23:17. (3) **Dod** in some contexts means "uncle" (Lev 10:4, 1Sa 10:14-16, Esther 2:15).

It is interesting that the writer did not use the more common Hebrew word **mishkab** ([04904](#) - [מישכב](#)) which is the word for bed as in a bedroom (but it is used in Song 3:1) and in some contexts speaks of intimacy (sexual contact - Jdg 21:12 = "had not known

[yada] a man by lying with him [mishkab]", cp Ge 49:4, Lev 15:24). The point is that they are in the courting stage and while clearly drawn to each other are restraining themselves from having intimate relations, thus presenting the Biblical pattern for preparation for marriage! This distinction between eres and mishkab is only relative however because eres is used by the harlot in Pr 7:16.

**POSB on handsome...and so pleasant** - The Shulamite commented on both the king's appearance and his demeanor. He was not only handsome—pleasing to the eyes—but also pleasant or charming—pleasing to be with. It is easy to imagine a surprised smile from Solomon as he received this unexpected departure from the pattern of their banter. Her distinction also highlights a key difference in men and women: men are primarily stimulated by what they see, while women are stimulated more by what they feel. Apparently, the young woman treasured the memory of their dates. This scene took place on one of their early dates, enjoyed outdoors in the beauty of nature, before the king moved his darling to the palace. The reference to the bed's being green refers not merely to the color, but to that which is lush and flourishing, commonly used to describe rich vegetation. The early seeds of their love grew in the house of nature. The young woman's choice of 'eres (bed) expresses a specific metaphor. This word was used of a bed or couch that was covered by an arched canopy. These two fell in love while enjoying nature together, walking along, then sitting on a sofa of thick, lush grass, arched by the native junipers and the majestic cedars of Lebanon. The scents that wafted from these fragrant trees freshened the air of their house out in nature.

**Couch** (06210 - ערש) (eres) usually implies some sort of fancy or elaborate bed, probably canopied or screened, and decorated with carved panels, not just the simple peasant pallet. The Lxx translated eres in Song 1:16 with the noun **kline** which means a bed or couch for resting or dining (Lk 17:34).

**Eres** - 9v - Usage: bed(1), bed\*(1), bedstead(2), couch(4), couches(1), sickbed\*(1).

Deuteronomy 3:11 (For only Og king of Bashan was left of the remnant of the Rephaim. Behold, his **bedstead** was an iron bedstead; it is in Rabbah of the sons of Ammon. Its length was nine cubits and its width four cubits by ordinary cubit.)

Job 7:13 "If I say, 'My **bed** will comfort me, My couch (mishkab - place of lying) will ease my complaint,'

Psalms 6:6 I am weary with my sighing; Every night I make my bed swim, I dissolve my **couch** with my tears.

Psalms 41:3 The LORD will sustain him upon his **sickbed**; In his illness, You restore him to health.

Psalms 132:3 "Surely I will not enter my house, Nor lie on my **bed**;

Proverbs 7:16 "I have spread my **couch** with coverings, With colored linens of Egypt.

Song of Solomon 1:16 "How handsome you are, my beloved, And so pleasant! Indeed, our **couch** is luxuriant!

Amos 3:12 Thus says the LORD, "Just as the shepherd snatches from the lion's mouth a couple of legs or a piece of an ear, So will the sons of Israel dwelling in Samaria be snatched away-- With the corner of a bed and the cover of a **couch**!

Amos 6:4 Those who recline on beds of ivory And sprawl on their couches, And eat lambs from the flock And calves from the midst of the stall,

**Carr** - This bed is described as green (verdant, NIV, **luxuriant**, NAS), but the word is not so much used of the color proper, but of a tree that is alive and in leaf. The NEB "shaded with branches" is a good paraphrase—the canopy of their love-bed is the leafy branches of the trees of the garden." ([The Song of Solomon - Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries - G. Lloyd Carr](#))

### Shulamite (or young woman) speaks...

Song 1:17 "The beams of our houses are cedars, Our rafters, cypresses

- **NET** - the cedars are the beams of our bedroom chamber; the pines are the rafters of our bedroom.
- **NLT** - fragrant cedar branches are the beams of our house, and pleasant smelling firs are the rafters.

**Cedars...cypresses** - The identity of these trees is not clear cut as shown by **NET** rendering of pines instead of cypresses.

**Beams of our houses are cedars** - The NIV note says this is spoken by Solomon but more likely it is a continuation of the Shulamite's discourse. Most commentators interpret verses 16-17 as referring to an outdoor, natural venue, a romantic setting that is pastoral not palatial.

**TODAY IN THE WORD:** In his book *The Five Love Languages*, Gary Chapman explains that every person uses a favorite “language” when expressing love to another person. Some people may use physical touch, in the form of a hug or a kiss. Others communicate love through action, by performing acts of service for others. To some a gift is the best way to show love, while others simply prefer to spend time with someone they love.

In today’s passage the bride and groom use words to express their love for one another. The groom speaks first and compliments the appearance of his bride. In particular, he singles out her eyes. The point of comparing them to doves is not entirely clear. Some have suggested that the comparison reflects an Egyptian custom of painting eyes in the shape that resembled a bird. Others believe it was the beauty of the dove, or even the fact that doves are often found in pairs, that prompted the comparison.

Similarly, the bride compliments the groom’s appearance. He is handsome and “charming.” This latter term could refer to his physical appearance or to his manner. The Hebrew word is used elsewhere in the Old Testament to refer to both goodness and charm.

The mutuality of their love is reflected in the fact that both the groom and the bride use the same language to refer to one another. The groom declares that the bride is “beautiful.” The bride uses a masculine form of the same word when she declares that the groom is “handsome.” It is the same word used in the Old Testament to characterize Joseph and David.

One of the keys to keeping the romance kindled in a relationship is to express love to one another. The couple in today’s passage made an effort to express love to one another verbally. The groom used an additional love language by taking steps to create a romantic atmosphere. Song 2:2 Like a

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**Joe Guglielmo sermon notes** - Now in this first part of verse 4 we see the Shulamite woman asking Solomon to take her away, for she has been swept off her feet by his love for her. In our relationship with the Lord we should be swept away, blown away by His unconditional love for us! Some say that this is still the Shulamite woman speaking. The problem for me is that it says, “We will run after you.” That doesn’t make sense since it is speaking of more than this Shulamite woman. I think these are the words of the daughters of Jerusalem and they too see this man and how wonderful he is and they too will run after him with her and see how this love relationship plays out. Now let’s look at this through a Christian perspective. As we live out our faith do others see the love we have of Christ and are they drawn to Him by what we say of Him? That truly should be the case. That they would desire to have what we have. Now will all desire this relationship? No, but as we live out our faith may they see the love we have for Jesus. Paul put it like this, “Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.” I Corinthians 11:1. If we do they will see that love! As some read this, that she has been taken into the Kings chambers, they feel that Solomon and this Shulamite woman had sexual relations before they were married. Think about that for a minute. Would this book be in the Bible and would it be called the “song of songs” or “the most exquisite song” or “the loveliest of songs”? Of course not, God calls sex outside of marriage fornication and thus, He would not put it in the “song of songs.” Yes we see sex outside of marriage in the Scriptures, but never in a positive context! Many times today as people are dating they say, “I love you!” which is a phrase meaning “I want to go to bed with you!” This is not what is going on here. I believe that they were married before they had any intimate relationship with each other. There was a commitment before God, a covenant before God towards each other and thus, their love was rich and it was deep because it was based in the Lord.

Others see this as not a physical room but that Solomon has welcomed her into the secrets of his heart, to be part of his life. This is also possible. The point we need to understand is that they did not have sexual relations prior to marriage. Today people have superficial relationships that are based upon sex and because of that those relationships don’t last. And we see that played out in our society today! In regards to our relationship with Jesus we cannot have that intimate relationship with Him apart from first making a pledge to Him, a commitment, that He is our Lord and Savior. In Psalm 63:1-8 we read, “O God, You are my God; Early will I seek You; My soul thirsts for You; My flesh longs for You In a dry and thirsty land Where there is no water. So I have looked for You in the sanctuary, To see Your power and Your glory. Because Your lovingkindness is better than life, My lips shall praise You. Thus I will bless You while I live; I will lift up my hands in Your name. My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, And my mouth shall praise You with joyful lips. When I remember You on my bed, I meditate on You in the night watches. Because You have been my help, Therefore in the shadow of Your wings I will rejoice. My soul follows close behind You; Your right hand upholds me.” As we have that hunger for God, as we thirst for Him, Jesus will fill us as He said in John 7:37-38, “. . . ‘If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’” May we have that kind of love, passion for our Lord!

#### **Song 1:4d-e**

The daughters of Jerusalem, these virgin women, are rejoicing for the love their friend has found, and they will always remember the love he showed towards her. Their love for each other was open, it was beautiful, it was real, and others saw it and desired to have that kind of relationship. Do others see that in your relationship with your spouse? They should! Do others see that in your

relationship with the Lord? They should!

### **Song 1:4f Song 2:2 Like a -**

Song 2:2 Like a The Shulamite is speaking to the daughters of Jerusalem, these virgins and she understands why these virgins love Solomon, but she is his!

I believe the song moves to a period of time prior to their meeting and goes into their dating, and-so-on. What we know of this woman is as follows. Her father was probably dead. She had a mother, a sister, at least 2 brothers or step-brothers and these brothers did not treat her too kindly. She was living, most likely, in an area of Ephraim, caring for a vineyard, and she also was a shepherdess. And one day she has an encounter with this handsome stranger, and she is embarrassed.

Why is she so embarrassed? Because her skin was dark, she was tanned and back then, if you were suntan that meant you worked out in the fields. Please understand that this is not saying she was black, it is saying that she was tanned. God has created us with a vast difference in colors and because of sin we differentiate that by what we call "races" and that is wrong. There is only one race and it is called the HUMAN RACE! No one is more important or less important, we are all on the same playing field and the problem comes when we try to put people into categories, and like I said, there is only one, the human race! The pigment of the skin is of no importance whatsoever. The condition of the heart is the important matter. So that is not the issue here.

This issue here, like I have said, is that she was tanned. You see, only those who were living in luxury had light skin or pale skin because they did not work out in the fields. In that culture tanned skin was not thought of as beautiful. Today people go to tanning salons to get tanned, go figure!

In Song 1:5 when it speaks of the "tents of Kedar" keep in mind that the people of Kedar were Nomads whose tents were dark black, and Solomon's curtains were white. This truly gives us a picture of what we are like as Christians. Outwardly we blow it, fail, we sin. But inwardly we are clean, pure; we are white by the righteousness of God imputed to us by Christ. That is why we need to crucify the flesh, less of us and more of Jesus that is seen in our lives!

And make no mistake about it, she was not lazy. She worked hard and her brothers or step-brothers forced her to work even harder. She worked so hard she couldn't even take care of herself. She is a farm girl who is going to encounter royalty! I guess you can call this a Cinderella story as she was forced to work by her cruel relatives.

Also, I think we can get so busy in our day-to-day life that we don't have the time or we don't take the time to cultivate in us those things that really matter, that intimate relationship with God, that inward beauty that God desires us to have! And because of that what flows from our lives is the works of the flesh instead of the fruit of the Spirit. Spend time with God, you can't afford not to because it will affect your life in a negative way if you don't!

### **Song 1:7**

Her desire is to be with him, she is in love with him and thus, she wants to know where he will be. She does not want to go around looking like a prostitute, veiling herself and wandering around. Glickman ([Solomon's Song of Love - Let a Song of Songs Inspire Your Own Romantic Story](#)) Song 2:2 Like a sums it up for us like this, "In their culture this term, 'a veiled woman,' referred to a loose girl, likely a prostitute. If she were going to see the king, she wanted it to be at the proper time and place – say, for example, when he was free in the middle of the day. She didn't want to go wandering around looking for him, appearing to be an aggressive and available prostitute to everyone else."

Today we see many women who really don't care how others think of them. They flaunt themselves around and they are not looking for a loving relationship, but for fornication. For this Shulamite woman, she understood that when it comes to sexual attraction and reputation, what others think does matter. And most of all, what does God think of your behavior, that should be the most important thing because if you get that right, you are in good shape!

One more point here and that is our relationship with the Lord. Are we satisfied in Him? Are we longing for that deep personal relationship with Him? Do we desire Him and we have come to that place where we are not going to let anyone else get in our way of spending time with Him? David said, "The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want." Psalm 23:1. May we learn to be satisfied in Him!

### **Song 1: 8-10**

He welcomes her presence and companionship, and is happy to have her with him. And he tells her that if you want to find out where he is, just follow the footsteps of the flock, they will lead you to me!

Think about that for a minute. Where is the shepherd to be found? With His sheep of course! What does that mean to us? I think that too often Christian's play the "Lone Ranger" and they are out there on their own. The old "Lone Ranger" not the new one! And

the problem for us with being out there on our own is it is wrong. God desires us to come together as a body of believers.

Hebrews 10:25 says, and this is from The Amplified Bible, “Not forsaking or neglecting to assemble together [as believers], as is the habit of some people, but admonishing (warning, urging, and encouraging) one another, and all the more faithfully as you see the day approaching.”

What Satan does is try to draw or divide the body apart, making people small, isolated islands, left in the open for the storms of life to come sweeping by. Don't allow a wedge to be placed between you and the body of Christ. The fellowship of the brethren is important! Follow the flock; let the little goats eat upon God's Word because that is where the shepherd is!

Remember how this Shulamite woman was insecure about her looks, well we see here that Solomon takes away that fear by telling her she is beautiful, that her beauty radiates. And we will see that throughout this song. Solomon speaks of her beauty and that has to bless her, encourage her. Men, I realize that this is hard for many of you, but your wife needs to hear you say those words, not necessarily that she is as beautiful as a filly but you know what I mean. Encourage them, bless them, tell them that they are beautiful!

And we see that God does the very same thing with us. You see, we know we are sinners. We know that there is no good in us, no beauty in us. But God does not see us as we are but what we will be.

In Isaiah 1:18 we read, “‘Come now, and let us reason together,’ Says the LORD, ‘Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool.’”

Also, in Ephesians 1:4-8 we read, “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 has made us accepted in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence.” Jesus has made us beautiful, never forget that!

### **Song 1:11**

These are the words from the daughters of Jerusalem and they want to bless this Shulamite woman with ornaments of gold and studs of silver. Why did they want to do this? I think that they just responded to the example that was set by Solomon, the beloved. The way that he treated her caused them to honor this Shulamite woman. Men, it is so important that you treat your wife with respect, with honor not only in the home but in public. That is so important because how you treat her in public others will also respond accordingly.

Now let's look at the picture that is being painted for us here. Gold is the metal of kingship, of glory. Silver is the metal of redemption. In other words, all the riches we have, all that God has given to us, is supported by what Christ has done. Paul, in Ephesians 1:3 said, “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.”

Also, remember all that Christ has done for us, our King has redeemed us, gave His life for us. Paul said in Ephesians 5:25-27, “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.” He redeemed us and we will stand before God with the righteousness of Christ that has been imputed into our lives by faith, “. . . not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.”

### **Song 1:12-14**

There they are together at the banquet table and her spikenard permeated the room. This fragrance was costly and yet she was willing to sell all to be a sweet smelling fragrance to her lover. She was a poor farm girl brought into the King's palace! In a sense it speaks of the worship of God, it should cost us something, our lives!

Then she speaks of Myrrh, and let me start out with this so you have a picture of what is going on here. When she says in verse 13, “A bundle of myrrh is my beloved to me, That lies all night between my breasts” she is referring to a custom from that period of time. You see, they would wear a small bag of myrrh, a perfumed ointment, around their neck all night. Then, the next day that fragrance would linger about her. That is how she sees her lover, her beloved!

And her beloved was an “En-Gedi” to her and I think Glickman ([Ref](#)) Song 2:2 Like a sums it up nicely what this means. He wrote, “The king was En-Gedi to this girl, an oasis of life in a desert of monotony, and like a weary traveler she found refreshment with him.”



### **Song 1:15**

Notice the beauty he sees in her and he is not afraid to tell her. How important it is to tell our wives how we feel about them, that they are beautiful. It gives them security, comfort, peace.

I do realize today that many of us feel ugly, not beautiful, not worthy, we are nothing! If you are in Christ you are wrong! As you read the Scriptures you will see that you are beautiful in God's eyes. Now some may say, "He has to feel that way!" No He doesn't. And let me say this, did He not form you in the womb? Of course He did! Do you think He made a mistake, ran out of material? Maybe that is why I am short? Of course that is not true, He didn't run out of material, you are the person He wants you to be and He loves you and He thinks you are beautiful. Is there anything else that is needed? I don't think so and yet He gives to us so much more!

### **Song 1:16-17**

Notice how she responds to the compliments from her beloved! She was attracted to his appearance, but keep in mind that it was not just his outward good looks, he had an inward beauty that she was drawn to. Remember back in Song of Solomon 1:3, "Because of the fragrance of your good ointments, Your name is ointment poured forth; Therefore the virgins love you." True love is based on outward appearance; you should be attracted to your spouse. But if that is all your relationship is based upon you are going to be in trouble. Outward beauty fades over time. I am not the same person I was when I met Julie; I have grown a lot, but not in height but in circumference! And yet Julie loves me, hopefully because of the inward beauty that is then manifested outwardly and because of that she does not see what age has done to me! That is true love, it needs to be inward and that will take care of the outward appearance!

And the description of their bed being green and the beams of their houses are cedar, the rafters of fir, could be speaking of them out on a walk in the country and seeing the beauty and relating it to their love! **Song of Solomon**)

**Go To Song of Songs 2 Commentary**