

# Song of Solomon 1 Commentary

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## 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><br>(Falling in Love)<br>Song 1:2-3:5 | <b>The Wedding</b><br>(United in Love)<br>Song 3:6-5:1 | <b>The Maturing Marriage</b><br>(Struggling and Growing in Love)<br>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<br>Before the<br>Marriage  | Procession for and<br>Consummation of the Marriage | The Honeymoon<br>is Over!<br>Song 5:2-6:13 | The Marriage Deepens<br>Love Matures<br>Song 7:1-8:14 |
| Chief Speaker:<br>The Bride<br>("Darling")   | Chief Speaker:<br>The Groom<br>("Beloved")         | Chief Speaker:<br>Both                     | Chief Speaker:<br>"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.<br>(Eph 5:32+, Rev 19:7-8+)  |  |  |   |
| <b>Date</b> - Circa 950-965BC<br>Time Period estimated at about 1 year<br>Before Solomon plunged into gross immorality and idolatry<br>(Compare only 140 women in Song 6:8+ with 1Ki 11:1-4, 5-7, 8, 9-10) |  |  |   |
| Adapted from <a href="#">Charles Swindoll's book chart</a>   |  |  |   |

## Introduction: Song of Solomon

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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).

*"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."*

- [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." ([Explore the Book](#))

**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 Bible online](#))

**G. Lloyd Carr's** series of excellent introductory audio comments on this controversial book...

- [Song of Songs 1 Introduction](#)
- [Song of Songs 2 Introduction](#)
- [Song of Songs 3 Introduction](#)
- [Song of Songs 4 Introduction](#)
- Borrow his [Solomon Commentary](#)

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#### **QUESTION - [Why is there an entire book of the Bible dedicated to romantic love? GOTQUESTIONS.ORG](#)**

**ANSWER** - Some people believe that the subject matter of the [Song of Solomon](#)—romantic love—is not a very noble theme. Some try to allegorize the book in order to provide it with a “higher” or more “spiritual” purpose. But what is “low” or “unspiritual” about the love between a husband and wife? The Song of Solomon is dedicated to the theme of romantic love. The Lord knows we need to see how love should look between a husband and wife.

Of course, Solomon had more than one wife. In fact, “he had seven hundred wives of royal birth and three hundred concubines” (1 Kings 11:3). While it is uncertain how old Solomon was when he composed his Song of Songs, his emphasis on one true love leads many scholars to suspect that Solomon was writing of his relationship with his first wife, before the sinful [multiplication of wives](#) occurred.

An overview of the contents of the Song of Solomon reveals many important aspects of romantic love. For example, there is a proper time and place for romantic love to begin to grow (Song 2:7). Romantic love involves a longing between a man and woman (Song 1:2–4), mutual admiration (Song 1:12–2:7), and a desire to be together (Song 3:1–5). Also, romantic love includes sexual expression, and the appropriate context for sexual intimacy is within marriage (Song 3:6–5:1).

After the wedding, couples face many different situations, and it is important for them to keep the romantic love alive. Couples will face occasional indifference to each other or time apart from each other (Song 5:2–8), followed by renewed displays of love—a rekindling of the romance (Song 5:9–16). Also important is communication within marriage. Song 7 focuses on improvement in this area, followed by an increase in intimacy (Song 8).

Romantic love and intimacy in a God-honoring marriage is an important goal for all couples. God presents love as something to be desired: “Many waters cannot quench love; / rivers cannot sweep it away. / If one were to give all the wealth of one’s house for love, / it would be utterly scorned” (Song of Solomon 8:7). True love [endures](#). It overcomes adversity. Nothing is worth giving up on godly love. Love is priceless.

In today’s society marriage is often ridiculed or broken or redefined, but the principles found in the Song of Solomon offer a godly

perspective on the importance of marriage, romantic love, communication between husband and wife, and the value of a marriage that endures.

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#### QUESTION - [Who wrote the book of Song of Solomon? GOTQUESTIONS.ORG](http://GOTQUESTIONS.ORG)

**ANSWER** - The title of [Song of Songs](#) is a translation of the Hebrew phrase *shiy'r hashiy'rim*. In English Bibles, it is alternatively titled Song of Solomon, drawn from the opening line: "The Song of Songs, which is Solomon's" (Song of Solomon 1:1). The beautiful, lyrical poetry paints an enduring picture of godly marriage. In graceful lines and vivid imagery, Song of Solomon celebrates a union between a man and a woman marked by passion, love, commitment, and physical desire.

No one knows for sure who wrote the book Song of Songs. Solomon is traditionally attributed as the author, as suggested by the opening line and references to his name throughout the book (Song of Solomon 1:5; 3:7, 9, 11; 8:11–12). In 1 Kings 4:32, King Solomon's body of writing is mentioned: "He composed some 3,000 proverbs and wrote 1,005 songs." If the Song of Songs is among the 1,005 Solomon wrote, it would likely be his finest work. The author references Lebanon several times, possibly reflecting the peaceful relationship between Israel and other nations during King Solomon's reign (see 1 Chronicles 22:9). If the wives and concubines of Song of Solomon 6:8 belong to Solomon, then the book was written fairly early in his reign (compare 1 Kings 11:3).

Some contemporary scholars question the traditional authorship of Song of Songs, arguing for a date of writing later than Solomon's time. In this view, the opening sentence doesn't necessarily mean that the book was written *by* Solomon but it could have been written *for* Solomon. Dissent also exists on whether the book is a single poem or an anthology. Proponents of the anthology theory point to abrupt shifts in scenes, subjects, speakers and moods, suggesting a composite work. Those who reject this notion argue for a seamless composition without clear divisions.

While conclusive evidence that Solomon wrote the Song of Songs is lacking, the internal data leads us to conclude that he's the likeliest author. There is no problem in subscribing to the traditional authorship based on the available information.

### 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"(Borrow [Solomon Commentary](#))

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."

**Charles 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 Shulammitte 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. (Borrow [Ryrie Study Bible](#))

**J Paul Tanner** in his highly recommended 23 page paper on interpretation of Solomon writes that

"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 23](#)). (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 in his discussion of "Jewish Allegorization" 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." (BORROW [Basic Bible Interpretation](#)) (Bolding added)

[Believer's Study Bible](#) - 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)."

**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." (Borrow [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+) [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](#)) (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 Shulammitte 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. ([Explore the Book](#))

[Believer's Study Bible](#) 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.

*Although there have been a number of interpretations of this book, the most obvious interpretation is no interpretation at all.*

**Henry 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 Shulammitte 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. ([Defenders Study Bible](#))

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." (BORROW [Basic Bible Interpretation](#)) (Bolding added)

**Irving 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." ([Jensen's Survey of Bible online](#))

**Bruce Wilkinson** and **Kenneth 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) (Borrow [Talk Thru the Bible](#))

**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. (Borrow [History of Interpretation: 1886](#))

**Grant R Osborne** in his work [The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation](#) page 42 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](#)) (See also his comments on [Song of Songs - Page 348](#))

**Michael Rydelnik** and **Tim M. Sigler** have an excellent summary on the Interpretation of Song of Solomon (Borrow [Moody Bible Commentary page 988](#)):

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. (Borrow [Moody Bible Commentary page 988](#) - recommended, conservative resource that approaches interpretation of Scripture literally)

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**Henry Morris** - [Introduction to Song of Solomon](#) Like the book of Ecclesiastes, the Song of Solomon (also known as “Song of Songs” and “Canticles”) is both fascinating and enigmatic, both providing striking testimonials (as in the book of Proverbs) to the unique, wide-ranging, wisdom of Solomon. Like the other two books, it claims to be from Solomon (Song of Solomon 1:1). Solomon was said to have written over a thousand songs (1 Kings 4:32), but this was his “Song of songs!”

The book was evidently written early in Solomon’s reign, long before his many wives turned his life away from devotion to his first love. 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.

In a secondary sense, the account may also be considered as a type of the love of Christ and His church, the “Bride of Christ” (compare Ephesians 5:22-33; Revelation 21:2; 22:17). **This analogy should not be pressed too far, of course, as the book should primarily be studied in accord with its own clear intent, that of describing and honoring the God-ordained union of man and woman in true love and marriage.**

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### [Dictionary of Biblical Imagery - Song of Songs](#)

The most persuasive interpretation of the title Song of Songs, taken from the first two words of the Hebrew text, is that it is the best of all songs. Certainly the book’s pervasive and compelling use of imagery lends credence to this claim. No other book of the Bible is so thick with simile, metaphor and other artful examples of language.

The most egregious errors in the interpretation of this book arise because of a failure or unwillingness to recognize its proper poetic quality. The imagery is too often treated as allegory in the negative sense, the characters and the images standing for persons or qualities for which there are no hints in the text itself. Or the literary allusions are turned into real people and events, as happens in the various dramatic interpretations of the Song.

But the Song is neither allegory nor drama. There is no plot or narrative, and no historical characters are involved, except by allusion (Song 3:7; 8:10–12). Rather, the Song is composed of loosely connected lyric poetry that expresses an emotion, indeed one of the most powerful of emotions: love. A prose description of love would not be as powerful. The poetic imagery expresses an emotion that transcends simple statement. It preserves a level of mystery and appeals to more than the mind—to the whole person.

**Nature Imagery.** Dominating everything else in the Song is the fact that it is a collection of pastoral love poetry. The conventions of pastoral, one of the most common literary conventions at every stage in the history of literature, are easy to grasp: the setting is rustic, the characters are shepherds and shepherdesses (usually a fictional disguise), and the actions are those customarily done by shepherds and shepherdesses. Pastoral love poetry, specifically, adds wooing and courtship to the activities performed by the characters. In pastoral love poetry, nature supplies most of the images by which the lovers express their romantic passions, including their praise of the beloved. Subtypes of pastoral love poetry include the invitation to love (an invitation to the beloved to stroll in a flowery and fruitful landscape is a metaphoric invitation to marriage and the life of mutual love [Song 2:10–15; 7:10–13]) and the emblematic blazon or *waṣf* (the beloved is praised by cataloging his or her beautiful features and comparing them to objects in nature [Song 4:1–7; 5:10–16; 6:4–7; 7:1–5]).

Nature imagery permeates the Song, and here we will only mention briefly the flowers, fountains, gardens, orchards, vineyards and animals that ornament this passionate love poetry. In the first place, many of the scenes of intimacy take place in natural settings. We read of the lovers’ tryst in a forest bedroom (Song 1:16–17). They find each other in verdant gardens (Song 6:2–3) and meet under an apple tree (Song 8:5). Such peaceful, romantic natural settings are contrasted with the hostile urban settings where the two lovers are separated from one another (Song 5:2–8).

The physical beauty of the couple is described using nature imagery. The man is like a gazelle or young stag on spice-laden mountains (Song 8:14). The woman is like a palm tree, her breasts like clusters of the vine (Song 7:7–8). Perhaps most powerful is the description of the woman’s body as a garden or a fountain (Song

4:12–5:1). In this wař the climactic focus is on the woman’s vagina, likened to a marvelous and sweet-smelling garden, a well-watered fountain. These are common ancient Near Eastern images of a woman’s vagina.

The metaphors of the book consistently draw upon nature, but it is important to realize that the correspondence is not primarily based on visual similarity. The point of the comparisons is instead the value that the speaker finds in his or her beloved. The lovers and their love are compared to the best things in nature. The poetic mode of the Song is not pictorial but emotional and sensuous in nonvisual ways (including tactile and olfactory). More than anything else, images of nature portray the quality of the beloved, and here we can see evidence of the Hebrew fondness for structure and for how things are formed. The comparison of the woman’s teeth to sets of twin shorn sheep fresh from washing (Song 4:2) is a typical specimen, capturing such qualities as whiteness, wetness, symmetry, completeness and flawlessness. A woman’s breasts are not visually like two fawns (Song 4:5), but the imagery captures her modesty (a passerby will not get close to two fawns) and their softness to the touch.

**Courtly Imagery.** One of the paradoxes of pastoral poetry is that it arose only with the rise of cities and civilization. Images of a royal court, with all its wealth and opulence, frequently break through the fictional façade of the Song’s pastoral world. The world of the Song is filled with expensive clothes, perfumes, rich foods, gems and erotic leisure. As early as Song 1:4, the woman addresses her lover as her king; in Song 7:5 the woman’s head is said to “crown” her and her hair is a “royal tapestry.” This language has mistakenly led some to argue that the Song is a story of a royal pair, perhaps Solomon and his Egyptian queen, but the language is love poetry, where the woman is a queen in the eyes of her lover and the man is a king in the eyes of his beloved.

The allusion to Solomon and his luxurious carriage in Song 3:6–11 adds to the royal motif. It is unclear whether we are to imagine the woman being carried in the carriage or the man being connected with it, but the point is that the lover and the beloved are associated with this object of royal luxury and leisure.

The wealth of the court is reflected in a number of the images in the Song, including those having to do with clothes, perfumes, food, gems and architecture. The veil, except in one instance, probably associates the woman with royalty and marriage (Song 4:1, 3; 6:7). The evidence indicates that Israelite women normally did not wear veils except during marriage ceremonies and among the wealthy and sophisticated classes. The one exception is Song 1:7–8, which is likely a reference to the fact that prostitutes also wore veils. In this instance the woman chides the man, asking him not to make her act like a prostitute as she seeks him out. But in the many other cases where the Song mentions a veil, a royal and perhaps marriage context is evoked.

Oils and spices are images of both court and nature. They were expensive and so the property of the rich only. Already in Song 1:2 the woman comments on the enticing fragrance of her lover, and the compliment is returned in Song 4:10. Of course, this image evokes the sense of smell, once again reminding the reader that the emotion of love is a multifaceted sensual experience.

The beauty of both the man and the woman is compared to the beauty of precious gems. Looking at Song 5:10–16 alone, we see the man’s head compared to gold, his eyes to jewels, his arms to rods of gold set with chrysolite. His body (the term more likely refers to his phallus) is a tusk of ivory decorated with sapphires, and so on. In a word, his physical beauty is attractive, even stunning, to behold.

Finally, the architectural images also partake of a courtly milieu. The woman’s neck, for example, is compared to David’s tower, in all likelihood to emphasize its grace and dignity (Song 4:4).

**Family Imagery.** Munro rightly identifies a series of metaphors in the Song which arise from the family. Interestingly, there is little marital imagery as such—no references to husband and wife (except perhaps when the man refers to the woman as his “bride” [Song 4:8–12; 5:1]), but there are significant references to mothers and siblings.

The mothers of the woman and the man support the relationship (Song 6:9; 8:5). The home of the former is a secure place for intimacy (Song 3:4; 8:2). Interestingly, the fathers are never mentioned in the Song; the woman’s brothers seem to take the place of her father. As opposed to her mother, the brothers are an obstacle to love’s intimacy, and she struggles to be free of their influence (Song 1:5–7; 8:8–12).

At one point the woman declares her wish that her lover were her brother, so that she might be intimate with him publicly as well as privately (Song 8:1). On the other hand, the man will often endearingly refer to his beloved as “his sister” (Song 4:9–10, 12; 5:1–2).

**Summary.** The world of the Song is a world of heightened emotion. Its genius is that it enables us to view the

world as experienced by people intoxicated with love (cf. the references to love as being better than wine [Song 1:2; 4:10], meaning more emotionally intoxicating than wine is physically intoxicating). The imagery of the Song is pastoral, passionate, erotic, sensuous, hyperbolic, metaphoric and affective. The style aims at an association of feelings and values rather than visual correspondence, and the imagery is symbolic rather than pictorial, figurative rather than literal.

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**Douglas Sean O'Donnell** has written a helpful article entitled ["The Earth Is Crammed with Heaven: Four Guideposts to Reading and Teaching the Song of Songs" in \*Themelios\* 37, April, 2012](#). Refer to this article for more detailed discussion of the 4 "Guideposts" summarized below...

**1. Guidepost One: This Is a Song** - We start with the first guidepost: This is a song. Our text begins, "The Song" (Song 1:1a).<sup>6</sup> The significance of this simple observation is that it identifies the genre. This is not a letter, gospel, law book, prophecy, or an apocalyptic revelation. This is a song. And a song (this is what I've learned after many years of study) is written to be sung. (Aren't you glad I'm your guide?) Perhaps this Song was originally written to be sung during the seven-day marriage festival.<sup>7</sup> We know that Israelite wedding celebrations lasted this long from Gen 29:27, Jdg 14:12, and extra-biblical Jewish history. And we know from Jer 7:34 that singing was part of these festivities: "the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride."<sup>8</sup>...The Song is a song. Thus each time you read and teach a poetic section, you should ask yourself, "What is the poetry doing?" You should try to feel the poetry before you act upon its message.<sup>12</sup> You should, in a sense (and with your senses), smell the myrrh, frankincense, and aloes, touch the polished ivory, taste the wine and apples, hear the flowing streams, see the gazelles leaping over the mountains ... yes feel the flashes of fire, the very flame of the LORD. That is the first guidepost: This is a song.

**2. Guidepost Two: About Human Love** - Here is the second guidepost: This is a song about human love set in the context of marriage.

We will deal with the second part of that sentence first. We have already noted that this is a wedding song. Let me now defend that claim. We know it is a wedding song from the cultural context. (The sexual revolution of the 1960's hadn't yet reached Jerusalem in 960 B.C.) In that place and time, there were only two kinds of love: "free love" between a man and a woman in marriage, and sexual slavery, which is found in adultery and fornication.<sup>13</sup> So we know that this is a wedding song from the cultural context (i.e., in Israel only sex within marriage was celebrated), but also from the language of the Song itself.<sup>14</sup> After the word "wedding" is used in 3:11 (as the wedding day of Solomon is used as a foil), the word "bride" is used of the young woman six times in the next seventeen verses (chs. 4–5). This is the heart of the Song, the section that undoubtedly describes sexual relations. Further support for this marriage-song thesis is found in the language of a permanent pledge, such as "set me as a seal upon your heart" (8:6) or "my beloved is mine, and I am his" (2:16a; cf. 7:5; 8:4).<sup>15</sup>...It is dangerous when Christian commentators, theologians, and pastors think there is a radical dichotomy between the sacred and the secular—praying is sacred; kissing is secular....Don't get me wrong here. The lyrics here about seeing, touching, and tasting are "candid but not crude."<sup>28</sup> They are not prudish, but neither are they immodest. They are far removed from the sexual anarchy and idiocy of our Top 40 music, as well as the crass love poetry of the ancient Near East. The Song has a beautiful balance: it has adult content, but it is adolescent-appropriate. It is not X-rated, but rated PG: parental (and pastoral) guidance recommended. This Song guides us to see with scriptural sensibilities that the earth is crammed with heaven,<sup>29</sup> that the way of a man with a woman is "too wonderful" (Prov 30:18–19), and that marriage is not simply a concession to the necessity of procreation, but an affirmation of the beauty, chastity, and sacredness of human love. This is a song about human love set in the context of marriage. I hope I have pounded that second (sadly necessary) guidepost soundly into place.

**3. Guidepost Three: Found in the Bible** - With our second guidepost in place, let me quickly add the third lest we get off course. Just because the Song is about human love does not mean that we must think a-theologically about it, namely, that it has nothing to say about God's love for us or our love for God. ....So here is the third guidepost: this is a song about human love set in the context of marriage that is found in the Bible. The Song of Songs cannot be read properly if it is read outside of its canonical context.<sup>30</sup> We must read its positive marriage imagery in contrast to Israel's unfaithfulness as depicted in the prophets....The Song is a song about human love set in the context of marriage, which is found in the Bible, and the Bible's ultimate reference point is Jesus: his birth, life, teachings, miracles, sufferings, death, resurrection, ascension, mediation, and return....Therefore, with this third guidepost in place, throughout our reading and teaching of the Song, we should seek, without exaggerating analogies, to be exegetically accurate, thoroughly canonical, and thus "boldly Christological."<sup>34</sup>

**4. Guidepost Four: Written to Give Us Wisdom** - Our fourth and final guidepost is about wisdom. This is a song (guidepost one) about human love (guidepost two) found in the Bible (guidepost three) written to give us wisdom (guidepost four).....

The four guideposts presented in this article—this is a song (guidepost one) about human love (guidepost two) found in the Bible (guidepost three) written to give us wisdom (guidepost four)—cannot explain every image or solve every philological, grammatical, and structural riddle, but hopefully they can give us greater confidence to read and teach this holy book that is wholly applicable today.

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**QUESTION - [What is wrong with the allegorical interpretation method? GOTQUESTIONS.ORG](#)**

**ANSWER** - The **allegorical** (or **spiritualizing**) method of interpretation was prominent in the church for about 1,000 years until it was displaced during the [Reformation](#) (**ED**: UNFORTUNATELY THEY DID NOT DISPLACE ALLEGORICAL INTERPRETATION ENTIRELY. WHEN THEY CAME TO CLEARLY ESCHATOLOGICAL OR APOCALYPTIC PASSAGES, MOST OF THE REFORMERS JETTISONED THE SAFE BOUNDS OF LITERAL INTERPRETATION AND WENT OUT OF BOUNDS SPIRITUALIZING MANY OF THE ESCHATOLOGICAL PASSAGES, ESPECIALLY THOSE RELATED TO THE FUTURE OF THE NATION OF ISRAEL - SEE [REPLACEMENT THEOLOGY](#) WHICH IS BASED ON A NON-LITERAL APPROACH!). The Reformers sought the “plain meaning” of Scripture. **Allegorical interpretation looks for a deeper, spiritual meaning within the text.** While not necessarily denying that the text has a literal meaning or that the historical incidents reported are true, allegorical interpreters will look for a deeper symbolic meaning. Some examples may be helpful:

The [Song of Solomon](#) is often interpreted allegorically as referring to the love that Christ has for the church.

In the Scofield Reference Bible, [C. I. Scofield](#) interprets Genesis 1:16 allegorically. While not denying the plain meaning of the verse regarding creation, he finds a deeper spiritual (he calls it typological) meaning. The greater light/sun is Christ, and the lesser light/moon is the church, reflecting the light of Christ, and the stars are individual believers. (**ED**: NOTICE HOW EASY IT IS TO VEER AWAY FROM THE LITERAL INTERPRETATION OF THE BIBLE!)

In his *Portraits of Christ in Genesis*, M. R. DeHaan says that Adam is a type of Christ because Adam was put to sleep, his side was opened—he was wounded and his blood was shed—and from that wound his bride was taken. In the same way, Christ died, had His side pierced, and from that ordeal His Bride, the church, is produced. Just as Adam said that Eve was bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh (Genesis 2:23), so the church is the body, flesh, and bone of Christ (see Ephesians 5:30). (**ED**: THIS SADDENS ME AS I GREATLY RESPECT M. R. DEHAAN, NORMALLY A “LITERALIST,” BUT IN THIS CASE HE IS SIMPLY TAKING THE TEXT TOO FAR FROM IT’S LITERAL MEANING.)

Perhaps the most famous instance of allegorical interpretation is Origen’s explanation of the [Parable of the Good Samaritan](#) in Luke 10. In the allegorical view, the man who is robbed is Adam, Jerusalem is paradise, and Jericho is the world. The priest is the Law, and the Levites are the Prophets. The Samaritan is Christ. The donkey is Christ’s physical body, which bears the burden of the wounded man (the wounds are his sins), and the inn is the Church. The Samaritan’s promise to return is a promise of the second coming of Christ.

We need to recognize that allegory is a beautiful and legitimate literary device. John Bunyan’s *The Pilgrim’s Progress* was written as an allegory of the Christian life. In this story, almost every action and character is intended to have a deeper, spiritual meaning. To interpret Bunyan’s story literally would be to miss the point completely.

*little difference between allegorical, typological, and symbolic interpretation.*

*They all look for a deeper meaning behind what would seem to be a literal reading of the Bible’s text.*

Really, there is little difference between allegorical, typological, and symbolic interpretation. They all look for a deeper meaning behind what would seem to be a literal reading of the Bible’s text. However, these methods should not be set in opposition to “[literal interpretation](#),” because every interpreter recognizes that some passages of the Bible are intended to be taken symbolically, typologically, or allegorically. For instance, Ecclesiastes 12:1–7+ speaks of a dilapidated estate, but this is an allegory for the ravages of age and time upon the human body (**ED**: AN BECAUSE IT IS SURELY ALLEGORICAL, ONE IS NOT SURPRISED THAT THERE ARE A VARIETY OF FANCIFUL INTERPRETATIONS ON SOLOMON’S DESCRIPTION!). All Christians would agree that the Old Testament sacrifices are symbolic for the greater sacrifice of Christ. When Jesus says, “I am the vine and you are the branches” (John 15:5), no one expects to find leaves and clusters of grapes sprouting from their arms. Even those who insist on a literal interpretation of the book of Revelation still expect “the Beast” to be a man, not an animal (see Revelation 13:4).

To insist upon a literal reading for a passage of Scripture that was intended to be taken in a symbolic manner is to miss the meaning



of the text. For instance, at the Last Supper Jesus says of the bread and wine, “This is my body. . . . This is my blood” (Luke 22:19–20). Jesus’ hearers in the room were partaking of a Passover meal in which every item on the menu was interpreted symbolically. For them to suddenly think that Jesus was speaking literally regarding these two elements is completely foreign to the context. Metaphor is a recognized literary device in use today and in the time of Christ. Jesus could have just as easily said, “This represents my body and my blood,” but in the context of the Passover, such directness was not necessary.

The problem with the allegorical method of interpretation is that it seeks to find an allegorical interpretation *forevery* passage of Scripture, regardless of whether or not it is intended to be understood in that way. Interpreters who allegorize can be very creative, with no control based in the text itself. It becomes easy to read one’s own beliefs into the allegory and then think that they have scriptural support.

There will always be some disagreement about whether certain texts are to be taken literally or figuratively and to what degree, as evidenced by disagreements over the [book of Revelation](#), even among those who have high regard for Scripture. For a text to be interpreted allegorically or figuratively, there needs to be justification in the text itself or something in the cultural background of the original readers that would have led them to understand the text symbolically. The goal of every interpreter who has a high view of Scripture is to discover the *intended* meaning of the text. If the intended meaning is simply the literal communication of a historical fact or the straightforward explanation of a theological truth, then that is the inspired meaning. If the intended meaning is allegorical/typological/symbolic/figurative, then the interpreter should find some justification for it in the text and in the culture of the original hearers/readers.

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Norman Geisler - [When Critics Ask](#)

### **SONG OF SOLOMON—How did a sensual book like this get in the Bible?**

**PROBLEM 1:** The Bible condemns the lust of the flesh and sensuality (Rom. 6:6; Gal. 5:16–21; 1 John 2:16). Yet this love song is filled with sensual expressions and sexual overtures (cf. Song 1:2; 2:5; 3:1; 4:5).

**SOLUTION 1:** The Bible does not condemn sex, but only perverted sex. God created sex (Gen. 1:27), and He ordained that it should be enjoyed within the bonds of a monogamous marriage and in a relationship of love. The Scriptures declare, “Rejoice with the wife of your youth. As a loving deer and a graceful doe, let her breasts satisfy you at all times; and always be enraptured with her love” (Prov. 5:18–19).

After warning against those who forbid marriage (1 Tim. 4:3), the apostle declares that “every creature of God is good” (v. 4), and he goes on to speak of the God “who gives us richly all things to enjoy” (6:17). Hebrews insists that “marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge” (Heb. 13:4).

God realizes that normal people will have sexual desires, but He adds, “Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband” (1 Cor. 7:2). So, sex itself is not sinful, nor are sexual desires. God created them and intends that they be enjoyed within the loving bonds of a monogamous marriage. The Song of Solomon is a divinely authoritative example of how sensual love should be expressed in marriage.

**PROBLEM 2: Some question whether this book should be in the Bible, claiming that some rabbis rejected it. Was it always a part of the Jewish Scriptures?**

**SOLUTION 2:** From the very earliest times, this book was part of the Jewish canon. Centuries after it was accepted into the canon of Scriptures, the school of Shammai (A.D. 1st century) expressed doubt about its inspiration, but the view of Rabbi Akiba ben Joseph (c. A.D. 50–132) prevailed when he declared, “God forbid!—No man in Israel ever disputed about the Song of Songs ... for all the ages are not worthy 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 Holiest of Holies” (See Geisler and Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible*, Moody Press, 1986, 259).

**PROBLEM 3:** Many modern scholars propose that this book of Solomon is simply a collection of love poems that have been put together on the basis of their similarity in theme. However, as a whole, this book is said to have been written by Solomon. How can it be a book written by Solomon if it is really only a loosely connected group of poems?

**SOLUTION 3:** Actually, the Song of Solomon is not a loosely connected group of love poems. The structure of the book demonstrates that it is a single poetic expression of the relationship between Solomon and his Shulamite bride. The structure of the Song of Solomon is revealed in the repetition of key phrases.

#### **OPENING PHRASES**

Song 2:8 “The voice of my beloved! Behold, he comes.”

#### **CLOSING PHRASES**

Song 2:7 “I charge you O daughters of Jerusalem ...”

Song 3:6 "Who is this coming ..."  
Song 6:10 "Who is she ..."  
Song 8:5 "Who is this coming ..."

Song 3:5 "I charge you O daughters of Jerusalem ..."  
Song 6:9 "The daughters saw her ..."  
Song 8:4 "I charge you O daughters of Jerusalem ..."

The structure of this book can be illustrated by the following outline.

- I. The mutual compassion of the lovers - Song 1:2–2:7 A
- II. Pre-wedding events - Song 2:8–3:5 B
- III. Wedding details - Song 3:6–6:9 C
- IV. Post-wedding events - Song 6:10–8:4 B'
- V. The mutual contentment of the lovers - Song 8:5–8:14 A'

The repetition of "A"s and "B"s is a pattern called **chiasm** that was frequently employed by the Hebrew poets as a means of structuring their material. This structure not only indicates the **unity of the book**, but it provides **evidence of a single author** who put the material together in this manner to tell a true story and communicate a message. This literal account of the love of Solomon for his wife teaches the sanctity of human love in the marriage relationship (cf. Heb. 13:4).

## 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 1 Kings 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

**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

"When A Husband Loves His Wife"

"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 (1Kings 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+)." ([Expository Notes](#))

[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). ([Jensen's Survey of Bible online](#))

**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 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

**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** gives the following background based on the book (see [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 in the article entitled "**Sanctity of Wedded Love**" in [Unger's Bible Handbook - BORROW](#), 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. ([Explore the Book](#))

## 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. ([Expositor's Bible Commentary](#) or see [The Expositor's Bible Commentary - Abridged Edition](#))

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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."

**THOUGHT:** 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 -

- [Expository Notes](#)

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

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

#### Horizon Community Church

- [28 Page Study Guide - very interesting](#)

#### Net Bible 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](#)

#### Steve Kreloff - Messianic Jewish Pastor

Expository Series on Song of Solomon. Literal approach. Practical Application. Although this is only available in Mp3, if you are interested in a serious study of the Song of Solomon, this 16 message series (plus 2 other messages related to "Biblical Marriage") is highly recommended. **If you listen to nothing else, take 46 minutes to listen to Pastor Kreloff's well reasoned analysis in his introduction.**

- [Introduction to the Song of Solomon](#)

- [Song of Solomon 1:2-3a - The Wedding Day \(Pt 1\)](#)
- [Song of Solomon 1:3b-8 The Wedding Day \(Pt 2\)](#)
- [Song of Solomon 1:9-14 Words of Praise at the Wedding Banquet](#)
- [Song of Solomon 1:15-2:7 The Wedding Night](#)

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

- [Song 1 Commentary](#)

**Tommy Nelson Love Song - A Study in the Song of Solomon Mp3's**

- [The Art of Attraction](#) Song of Solomon 1:1-2:7

**Douglas O'Donnell**

- [Invitation to Song of Solomon](#)
- [Purpose](#)
- [Key Verse](#)
- [Outline](#)
- [Rejoicing in Love \(1:1-4\)](#)
- [Behold, You Are Beautiful \(1:5-2:7\)](#)

**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

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

KJV Song of Solomon 1:1 The song of songs, which is Solomon's.

NKJ Song of Solomon 1:1 The song of songs, which is Solomon's.

NET Song of Solomon 1:1 Solomon's Most Excellent Love Song.

BGT Song of Solomon 1:1 σμα σμ των σιν τ Σαλωμων

LXE Song of Solomon 1:1 The Song of songs, which is Solomon's.

CSB Song of Solomon 1:1 Solomon's Finest Song.

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

NIV Song of Solomon 1:1 Solomon's Song of Songs.

NLT Song of Solomon 1:1 This is Solomon's song of songs, more wonderful than any other. Young Woman

YLT Song of Solomon 1:1 The Song of Songs, that is Solomon's.

NJB Song of Solomon 1:1 Solomon's Song of Songs:

**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.

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... (See [Song of Songs - Page 348](#))

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 Shulammitte (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 Bible online](#))

**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. (See [Job, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs - Page 348](#))

**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 1 Kings began to unravel. Some say this was written when Solomon was an old man and had "returned to his senses!" 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 Shulammitte'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!

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**Douglas O'Donnell** This God-inspired book, which is undoubtedly the design of a literary genius, opens with rhetorical flair. The book's title "The Song of Songs, which is Solomon's" (Song 1:1) is an example of a consonance, wherein the repeated sh sound in Hebrew (shir hashirim asher lishlomoh) followed by the r sound emphasizes the Hebrew word for "song" (shir). The singular word ("the Song") suggests that the various poetic scenes throughout the book are to be read as a unified whole. Moreover, it introduces its genre. The Song is a song! There is no record in Scripture of it set to music and sung at a seven-day wedding celebration, but Scripture does speak of love songs sung at weddings (Ezek 33:32; Jer 33:11). With the different voices, the reader can easily envision then and now the bride singing soprano, the groom tenor, and the bridesmaids the chorus. This greatest of songs on the most enduring of virtues is the perfect celebration of the new creation of man and wife as "one flesh" (Gen 2:24).

The Song is a song, but also a mini-drama that contains refrains, bodily descriptions, dream sequences, and a climactic definition of love. The full story of the bride and groom is far from complete. No names, specific locations, or aspects of their courtship are provided, but there is enough of a storyline to decipher the drama. The Song tells the love story of a young couple who, with the blessing of friends and family, celebrates their commitment and consummation.

The shape of that story is debated. Some scholars believe the couple moves from courtship to the wedding to married life. Other scholars, due to the physical forthrightness of the first lines, set the whole Song within the context of marriage. The second view, that the couple is already wed, makes better sense. For surely a covenantal relationship is implied in the woman's provocative plea, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth!" (Song 1:2) followed by the community's wholehearted approval (Song 1:4, as translated by Richard Hess):

We will indeed rejoice and be happy for you.  
We will indeed recall your lovemaking more than wine.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, in the opening scene this married couple details three movements. First, the bride, with justifiable impatience (now is to the time to arouse and awaken love!), expresses to her newlywed husband two wishes: for him ("let him kiss me," Song 1:2) and to him ("draw me after you," Song 1:4). She desires his lips and his lovemaking—to run away with him into his bedroom ("let us run . . . into his chambers," Song 1:4) to enjoy the intoxicating pleasures of his sweet and tasteful touches ("your love is better than wine," 1:2b). The cause of such desire is not merely physical and emotional. It relates also to his commendable character: his "name" (shem) is described as a fragrant perfume or "oil [shemen] poured out" (Song 1:3). To her, as she reaches for a metaphor fitting his love and name, she grasps for royalty. Though he is a shepherd who shepherds a flock by day (Song 1:7), that night he lovingly rules over her body like a "king" (Song 1:4; cf. Song 2:4).

At the climax of the scene—as the grammar enhances the growing expressions of intimacy (the bride moves from "him" in the third person to "you" in the second person to "us" in the first person)—the others (likely the bridesmaids) interrupt to agree with and approve of both the bride's assessment of her man ("therefore virgins love you," Song 1:3; "rightly do they love you") their relationship, and expression of that relationship ("we will exult and rejoice in you" Song 1:4).

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**NET Notes** NET Solomon's 1 Most Excellent 2 Love Song. 3 4

1 The preposition ל in לְשֹׁלֹמֹה (asher lishlomoh) has been taken as: (1) authorship: "which is written by Solomon." The lamed of authorship (also known as lamed auctoris) is well attested in Hebrew (see GKC 421 §130.b), particularly in the psalms (e.g., Pss 18:1; 30:1; 34:1; 51:1; 52:1; 54:1; 56:1; 57:1; 59:1; 60:1; 63:1; 72:20); (2) dedication: "which is dedicated for Solomon." The lamed of dedication is attested in Ugaritic psalms dedicated to Baal or about Baal (CTA 6.1.1 = UT 49.1); or (3) topic: "which is about/concerning Solomon." The lamed of topic is attested in Hebrew (e.g., 1 Chr 24:20) and in Ugaritic, e.g., lb'l "About Baal" (CTA 6.1.1 = UT 49.1). The ל is most likely denoting authorship. The ל followed by a name in the superscription of a poetic composition in the OT, usually (if not always) denotes authorship. Just as the superscription לְדָוִד (lédavid) claims Davidic authorship within the Psalter, the heading claims Solomonic authorship. Whether or not this attribution is historically reliable or simply a matter of Jewish tradition is debated in scholarship, just as the Davidic superscriptions in the Psalter are debated (see study note on the word "Song" in the superscription).

2 Heb "the song of songs." The genitive construct שִׁיר הַשִּׁירִים (shir hashirim) is translated literally as "the song of songs" in the early versions: Greek LXX (σῦμα σμᾶτων, asma asmatōn), Latin Vulgate (canticum

canticorum) and Syriac Peshitta (tešbéhat tešbéhātā'). The phrase שִׁיר הַשִּׁירִים may be understood in two ways: (1) The noun הַשִּׁירִים is a plural of number ("songs") and functions as a genitive of composition: "the song composed of several songs," that is, the book is a unified collection (hence the singular שִׁיר "song") composed of individual love songs (see note on the expression "Her Lover" in v. 1). (2) The expression may be a superlative genitive construction denoting par excellence (see IBHS 154 §9.5.3; GKC 431 §133.i; R. J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax*, 11, §44; 17–18, §80). For example, קֹדֶשׁ קְדָשִׁים (qodesh qadashim, "the holy of holies") means the most holy place (Exod 29:37); אֱלֹהֵי הָאֱלֹהִים וַאֲדֹנֵי הָאֲדֹנִים (elohe ha'elohim va'adone ha'adonim, "the God of Gods and Lord of Lords") means the Highest God and the Supreme Lord (Deut 10:17); and עֶבֶד עֲבָדִים ('eved 'avadim, "a slave of slaves") means an abject slave (Gen 9:25). The title "the Song of Songs" is an expression of great esteem for the composition. It has been translated variously: "The Song of Songs, which is Solomon's" (KJV, NKJV, RSV, NRSV, NASB), "Solomon's Song of Songs" (NIV), "The most beautiful of songs, by Solomon" (TEV), "dedicated to," or "about Solomon" (TEV margin), "Solomon's most beautiful song" (CEV), "This is Solomon's song of songs, more wonderful than any other" (NLT).

3 Heb "song." The noun שִׁיר (shir) may refer to a musical song that was sung (Exod 15:1; Num 21:17; Ps 33:3; Isa 42:10) or a poetic composition that was simply read (Deut 31:19, 21, 22; 30; 32:44) (BDB 1010 s.v. שִׁיר). Several factors suggest that the Song of Songs was poetry to be read and enjoyed rather than sung: (a) its sheer length, (b) absence of musical notations or instrumental instructions, (c) testimony of Jewish tradition and interpretation, (d) lack of evidence of its musical performance in the history of Israel, and (e) comparison with ancient Egyptian love poetry. The term שִׁיר here probably refers to love poetry (e.g., Isa 5:1) (BDB 1010 s.v. 1; W. L. Holladay, *Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon*, 368). The Song appears to be a collection of individual love songs rather than a single multistanza poem. For comparison of the Song of Songs with ancient Egyptian love songs, see M. V. Fox, *The Song of Songs and the Ancient Egyptian Love Songs*, and J. B. White, *Language of Love in the Song of Songs and Ancient Egyptian Poetry* (SBLDS).

The superscription "Solomon's Most Excellent Love Song" appears to be a late addition, just as many superscriptions in the Psalter appear to have been added to the psalms sometime after their original composition. R. E. Murphy (*Song of Songs [Hermeneia]*, 119) notes that the use of the independent relative pronoun אֲשֶׁר ('asher) in 1:1 sharply distinguishes the superscription from the body of the Song as a whole where the short form -שֶׁ (she-) occurs thirty-two times (e.g., 1:6, 12; 6:5). The short form -שֶׁ also occurs frequently in Ecclesiastes which is traditionally attributed to Solomon. Therefore, it would appear that the superscription is a later addition to the Song. This, of course, raises the question whether or not the attribution of Solomonic authorship of the Song is historically reliable or simply a matter of later Jewish tradition.

4 tn The introductory headings that identify the speakers of the poems throughout the Song do not appear in the Hebrew text. They are supplied in the translation for the sake of clarity. These notations should not be misinterpreted as suggesting that the Song be interpreted as a drama. Throughout the Song, the notation "The Lover" refers to the young man, while "the Beloved" refers to the young woman. Since the Song of Songs appears to be a collection of individual love songs, the individual love poems within the collection might not have originally referred to the same young man and young woman in each case. Just as the Book of Proverbs contains proverbs composed by Solomon (10:1–22:16; 25:1–29:27) as well as proverbs composed by other wise men (22:17–24:34; 30:1–31:9), so the Song of Songs may contain love poems composed by Solomon or written about Solomon as well as love poems composed by or written about other young couples in love. Nevertheless, the final canonical form of this collection presents a unified picture of idyllic love between one man and one woman in each case. The young man in several of the individual love poems is explicitly identified as Solomon (1:5; 3:7; 8:11–12), King Solomon (3:9, 11) or the king (1:4; 7:6). Some statements in the Song are consistent with a royal figure such as Solomon: references to Tirzah and Jerusalem (6:4) and to multiple queens and concubines (6:8). It is not so clear, however, whether Solomon is the young man in every individual poem. Nor is it clear that the same young woman is in view in each love poem. In several poems the young woman is a country maiden working in a vineyard (1:5–6; 8:11–12); however, the young woman in another poem is addressed as "O prince's daughter" (7:2). The historian notes, "Solomon loved many women, especially the daughter of Pharaoh" (1 Kgs 11:1). So it would be surprising if the Song devoted itself to only one of Solomon's many liaisons. The Song may simply be a collection of love poems written at various moments in Solomon's illustrious career as a lover of many women. It may also include love poems written about other young lovers that were collected into the final form of the book that presents a portrait of idyllic love of young lovers.



**1. This chapter has several commands and exhortations:**

1. "Kiss me," Sol 1:1, BDB 676, KB 730, *Qal* IMPERFECT, used in a JUSSIVE sense
2. "Draw me after you," Sol 1:4, BDB 604, KB 645, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
3. "Let us run together," Sol 1:4, BDB 930, KB 1207, *Qal* COHORTATIVE
4. "We will rejoice," Sol 1:4, BDB 162, KB 189, *Qal* COHORTATIVE
5. "Be glad," Sol 1:4, BDB 970, KB 1333, *Qal* COHORTATIVE
6. "We will extol your love," Sol 1:4, BDB 269, KB 269, *Hiphil* COHORTATIVE
7. "Do not stare at me," Sol 1:6, BDB 906, KB 1157, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
8. "Tell me," Sol 1:7, BDB 616, KB 665, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
9. "Go forth," Sol 1:8, BDB 422, KB 425, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
10. "pasture" (i.e., feed), Sol 1:8, BDB 944, KB 1258, *Qal* IMPERATIVE

There are several more, particularly in chapters 2; 4; and 7.

**2. Many of the words in this poem carry extended connotations (double entendre) of love-making**

1. oils, Sol 1:3
2. his chambers, Sol 1:4
3. my own vineyard, Sol 1:6
4. lie down at noon, Sol 1:7
5. veil, Sol 1:7
6. table, couch, Sol 1:12
7. nard, Sol 1:12
8. myrrh, Sol 1:13
9. "lies all night between my breasts," Sol 1:13
10. "henna blossoms in the vineyards of Engedi," Sol 1:14
11. "couch is luxuriant," Sol 1:16

Physical love is a gift from God (cf. Gen. 1:27-28). Families are His idea (cf. Gen. 1:28). Sexual love is the gift of God to be cherished and honored (one man, one woman for life). Rejoice in the wife of your youth (cf. Eccl. 9:7-9). Love is powerful and valuable (cf. Sol. 8:6-7).

**Shulamite (or young woman)**

**Song 1:2 "May he kiss me with the kisses of his mouth! For your love is better than wine."**

KJV Song of Solomon 1:2 Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: for thy love is better than wine.

NKJ Song of Solomon 1:2 THE SHULAMITE Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth-- For your love is better than wine.

NET Song of Solomon 1:2 Oh, how I wish you would kiss me passionately! For your lovemaking is more delightful than wine.

BGT Song of Solomon 1:2 φιληστω με πι φιλημ των σιματος α το τι γαθο μαστο σου προνον

LXE Song of Solomon 1:2 Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: for thy breasts are better than wine.

CSB Song of Solomon 1:2 Oh, that he would kiss me with the kisses of his mouth! For your love is more delightful than wine.

ESV Song of Solomon 1:2 Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth! For your love is better than wine;

NIV Song of Solomon 1:2 Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth-- for your love is more delightful than wine.

NLT Song of Solomon 1:2 Kiss me and kiss me again, for your love is sweeter than wine.

YLT Song of Solomon 1:2 Let him kiss me with kisses of his mouth, For better are thy loves than wine.

NJB Song of Solomon 1:2 BELOVED: Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, for your love-making is sweeter 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

**\*\*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.

[ESV Study Bible \(BORROW\)](#) Song 1:2-2:17 **The Lovers Yearn for Each Other.** The two main characters, apparently betrothed, are introduced as they sing of their desire for each other. Throughout the Song of Solomon, the speakers and addressees are inferred from the gender and number of the Hebrew words.

[Third Millennium](#) - The woman fantasized about the kisses of the man she loved. Third person expressions in Song of Solomon 1:2, 4 ("Let him kiss me . . . Let the king bring me") open and close the paragraph, which is otherwise in the second person ("your love . . . your name"). The young lady oscillated between thinking about the absent young man and addressing him as though he were present. Provan says, "The woman wants nothing other than that her lover should kiss her "with the kisses of his mouth," for she considers his "love" (dod, referring here to acts of lovemaking, as in Prov. 7:18; Ezek. 16:8; and [negatively] in Ezek. 23:17) to be far better than wine. It intoxicates her and gives her more pleasure and delight than wine could ever provide (Song 1:2).

**Lloyd 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." (Borrow [Solomon Commentary](#))

**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.

[Bob Utley](#) - A common feature of the Hebrew language which surprises and confuses modern readers is the constant switch between SECOND PERSON and THIRD PERSON. This verse illustrates this common feature well:

1. line 1 is THIRD PERSON (may he kiss me)
2. line 2 is SECOND PERSON (your love is better than wine)

As moderns we (even Jewish scholars) do not know the inferences and common textual features (sometimes unconsciously learned) of ancient Hebrew (i.e., before vowels, before Aramaic).

[Bob Utley](#) - "**kiss**" In Ancient Near Eastern cultures kissing (BDB 676, KB 730, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense) was done in private (cf. Sol 1:4). See Contextual Insights, A. Notice the term's repetition for emphasis.

[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.

[ESV Study Bible \(BORROW\)](#) **Wine** is an obvious analogy for love—both cause exuberance and lightheadedness.

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. (See [Job, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs - Page 348](#))

**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)

**J Stafford Wright** 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](#)." (See [The Expositor's Bible Commentary - Abridged Edition- Page 262](#))

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 דָּד (dod) normally means "lovemaking" (Prov 7:18; Song 4:10; 7:12[13]; Ezek 16:8; 23:17). The plural form דָּדֵךָ (dodekha, lit. "your lovemakings") is probably not a plural of number but an abstract plural (so BDB 187 s.v. 3 דָּד). "

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!

**Bob Utley** -

**Thomas 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](#))

**Wright** adds that "It is as if she begins with the wish in her mind and then shifts almost unwittingly to speaking directly to him." (See [The Expositor's Bible Commentary - Abridged Edition](#))

**David 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. (Borrow [Song of Solomon. Communicator's Commentary](#))

**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!

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**NET Notes** NET Oh, how I wish you<sup>5</sup> would kiss me passionately!<sup>6</sup> For your lovemaking<sup>7</sup> is more delightful<sup>8</sup> than wine.<sup>9</sup>

5 tn Heb "May he kiss me...." The shift from 3rd person masculine singular forms ("he" and "his") in 1:2a to 2nd person masculine singular forms ("you") in 1:2b–4 has led some to suggest that the Beloved addresses the Friends in 1:2a and then her Lover in 1:2b–4. A better solution is that the shift from the 3rd person masculine singular to 2nd person masculine singular forms is an example of heterosis of person: a poetic device in which the grammatical person shifts from line to line (M. H. Pope, *Song of Songs* [AB], 297). The third person is put for the second person (e.g. Gen 49:4; Deut 32:15; Ps 23:2–5; Isa 1:29; 42:20; 54:1; Jer 22:24; Amos 4:1; Micah 7:19; Lam 3:1; Song 4:2; 6:6) (E. W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech*, 524–25). Similar shifts occur in ancient Near Eastern love literature (cf. S. N. Kramer, *The Sacred Marriage Rite*, 92, 99). Most translations render 1:2 literally and preserve the shifts from 3rd person masculine singular to 2nd person masculine singular forms (KJV, AV, NASB, NIV); others render 1:2 with 2nd person masculine singular forms throughout (RSV, NJPS).

6 tn Heb "May he kiss me with the kisses of his mouth!" The phrase מְנִשְׁקוֹתַי (yishshaqeni minnéshiqot, "kiss me with kisses") is a cognate accusative construction used for emphasis.

7 tc The MT vocalizes consonantal דָּדֶיךָ as דֹּדֶיךָ (dodekha, "your loves"; mpl noun from דָּד, dod, "love" + 2nd person masculine singular suffix). The LXX and Vulgate reflect the vocalization דָּדֶיךָ (daddekha, "your breasts"; mpl noun from דָּד, dad, "breast" + 2nd person masculine singular suffix). This alternate tradition was well known; it was followed by Hippolytus of Rome (d. 235) in his exposition of Canticles 1:2 and by Rabbi Yohanan of Tiberias (3rd century A.D.) as recorded in the Jewish midrashim on Canticles Rabbah 1:2.2. However, the MT vocalization is preferred. In terms of external evidence, the MT vocalization tradition is generally more reliable. In terms of internal evidence, the LXX form דָּדֶיךָ (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., 1:4; 4:10; 5:1; 7:13 [ET 12]). Although it may be understood in the general sense meaning "love" (Song 1:4), the term דָּד (dod) normally means "lovemaking" (Prov 7:18; Song 4:10; 7:12[13]; Ezek 16:8; 23:17). The plural form דָּדֶיךָ (dodekha, lit. "your lovemakings") is probably not a plural of number but an abstract plural (so BDB 187 s.v. 3 דָּד).

8 tn Heb "better than." With the comparison of lovemaking to wine, the idea is probably "more intoxicating than wine" or "more delightful than wine."

9 tn The young woman compares his lovemaking to the intoxicating effects of wine. A man is to be "intoxicated" with the love of his wife (Prov 5:20). Wine makes the heart glad (Deut 14:26; Judg 9:13; Ps 104:15) and revives the spirit (2 Sam 16:1–2; Prov 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 467–469).

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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)

### Shulammitte (or young woman)

#### Song 1:3 "Your oils have a pleasing fragrance, Your name is like purified oil; Therefore the maidens love you

KJV Song of Solomon 1:3 Because of the savour of thy good ointments thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee.

NKJ Song of Solomon 1:3 Because of the fragrance of your good ointments, Your name is ointment poured forth; Therefore the virgins love you.

NET Song of Solomon 1:3 The fragrance of your colognes is delightful; your name is like the finest perfume. No wonder the young women adore you!

BGT Song of Solomon 1:3 κα σμ μ ρων σου π ρ π ντα τ ρ ματα μ ρον κκενωθ ν νομ σου δι το το νε νιδες γ πησ ν σε

LXE Song of Solomon 1:3 And the smell of thine ointments is better than all spices: thy name is ointment poured forth; therefore do the young maidens love thee.

CSB Song of Solomon 1:3 The fragrance of your perfume is intoxicating; your name is perfume poured out. No wonder young women adore you.

ESV Song of Solomon 1:3 your anointing oils are fragrant; your name is oil poured out; therefore virgins love you.

NIV Song of Solomon 1:3 Pleasing is the fragrance of your perfumes; your name is like perfume poured out. No wonder the maidens love you!

NLT Song of Solomon 1:3 How fragrant your cologne; your name is like its spreading fragrance. No wonder all the young women love you!

YLT Song of Solomon 1:3 For fragrance are thy perfumes good. Perfume emptied out -- thy name, Therefore have virgins loved thee!

NJB Song of Solomon 1:3 delicate is the fragrance of your perfume, your name is an oil poured out, and that is why girls love you.

- **fragrance** - Song 3:6 4:10 5:5,13
- **maidens** - Song 6:8

## THE FRAGRANCE OF HIS NAME

**Your oils have a pleasing fragrance, Your name is like purified oil** ([shemen](#)) ("your name is perfume"); **Therefore the maidens love you.** - 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.

[ESV Study Bible \(BORROW\)](#) **Name... oil** is a wordplay (Hebrew *shem...shemen*). "Name" refers to his reputation, which is as



alluring as spilled perfume.

**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.

**Bob Utley - Purified Oil** - This VERB'S (BDB 937, KB 1227, Hophal IMPERFECT) basic meaning is to empty something. The NASB, in the margin, defines it as "which is emptied (from one vessel to another)." The question remains, what does this VERB imply: a purifying procedure or a widespread reputation (i.e., among the harem). In context the second fits best.

**"Your name is ointment poured forth."** The first pressing of the oil was the purest of pure used in the lamp stands in the tabernacle. His purity and character gave a reputation to all the virgins for the type of man he was. His name was his character

**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).

**Bob Utley - "oils"** The basic meaning of this term (BDB 1032, KB 1566-1569) is "fat" or "rich" (i.e., land, e.g., 5:1). It refers to olive oil, which was a daily food item and when put on the face, a sign of prosperity and festival (e.g., Isa. 25:6). Here it is used of perfumed oil (cf. Sol 4:10; Ps. 27:9; Eccl. 7:1; 10:1; Amos 6:6).

**Bob Utley - "your name"** This (BDB 1027) refers to the beloved person. Just the thought of this person brought the scent of perfume. A name used as sweet scent is also found in Eccl. 7:1. There is an obvious word play between "oils" (BDB 1032) and "name" (BDB 1027). This is common in Hebrew prose and especially in Hebrew poetry.

**Bob Utley - Maidens** This is the Hebrew word *almah* (BDB 761, KB 835, cf. Isa. 7:14; see [SPECIAL TOPIC: VIRGIN](#)). This Hebrew word refers to a young woman of reproductive years, married or unmarried (i.e., not solely "virgins," Peshitta). The exact identity of these young women is uncertain (see note at Sol 1:5). There seem to be two major possibilities: Solomon's harem, the ladies of Jerusalem or Solomon's court (cf. Sol 1:5; 2:7; 3:5,10; 5:8,16; 8:4)

**Bob Utley - LOVE** - This is the general term for love (BDB 12, KB 17) in the Hebrew language. The uniqueness of this word usage in Song of Songs is that it is predominately used for the maiden's affection for her lover. The OT was written in a male-centered society. A woman's feelings or concerns are usually not recorded. This book is not only an affirmation of the beauty and wholesomeness of physical love, but of reciprocal love!

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).

**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 of Solomon 1](#))

Song 2:2 **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](#)) 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 2 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!

**CAVEAT** - In a secondary sense, the account may also be considered as a type of the love of Christ and His church, the "Bride of Christ" [cp Ep 5:22-33; Rev 21:2; 22:17]. **This analogy should not be pressed too far**, of course, as the book should primarily be studied in accord with its own clear intent, that of describing and honoring the God-ordained union of man and woman in true love and marriage. - Morris

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**Oil** (cologne) ([08081 - יָנִיב](#)) (**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 - [Dictionary of Biblical Imagery](#) (online)
- Oil - [International Standard Bible Encyclopedia](#)

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**NET Notes** NET The fragrance 10 of your colognes 11 is delightful; 12 your name 13 is like the finest 14 perfume. 15 No wonder the young women 16 adore 17 you!

10 tn The preposition לָ (lé) of לְיָנִיב (lérekha) has been understood in three ways: (a) dative of reference: "with respect to fragrance [your perfumes are pleasing]" (see GKC 430 §133.d); (b) asseverative or emphatic: "indeed the fragrance [of your perfumes is pleasing]" (see R. J. Williams, Hebrew Syntax, 50–51, §283); or (c) comparative: "[your lovemaking is better than wine], indeed better the scent [of precious ointments]" (W. F.

Albright, "Archaic Survivals in the Text of Canticles," *Hebrew and Semitic Studies*, 2, n. 4).

11 tn Heb "the scent of your oils." The term שֶׁמֶן (shemen, "cologne") refers to perfumes or colognes (Eccl 7:1; 10:1; Song 4:10). In Israel bodily oils were expensive (1 Kgs 17:12ff; 2 Kgs 2:4ff). Possession of oils and perfumes was a sign of prosperity and luxury (Deut 32:8; 33:24; Job 29:6; Prov 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).

12 sn The term טוֹבִים (tovim, "pleasing") refers to what is pleasant to the olfactory senses (BDB 373 s.v. טוֹב 1.c) (e.g., Jer 6:20).

13 sn The term שֶׁמֶךָ (shémekha, "your name") may be a metonymy of association for her lover. In Hebrew idiom, the name often represents the person (e.g., 1 Sam 25:25).

14 tn The meaning of the phrase שֶׁמֶן תוֹרֵק (shemen turaq) is difficult to determine; several options have been proposed: (1) Traditionally, the term תוֹרֵק is taken as a verb (Hophal imperfect 3rd person feminine singular from רִיק, riq, "to pour out") which functions as an attributive adjective modifying the noun שֶׁמֶן ("oil, perfume"): "poured out oil." The phrase is taken this way by LXX λαϊον κησομενον ("oil poured out") which seems to reflect a Hebrew Vorlage of a passive verb functioning adjectivally. Accordingly, the phrase is traditionally translated "ointment/oil poured forth/poured out" (KJV, NKJV, ASV, NIV, RSV, NRSV, NJB), "purified oil" (NASB) or "spreading perfume" (NAB, CEV). However, this is syntactically awkward because: (a) the noun שֶׁמֶן ("oil") is masculine (BDB 1032 s.v. שֶׁמֶן) but the verb תוֹרֵק ("poured out") is feminine (3rd person feminine singular); and (b) this would demand heterosis of the verb for an adjective function. (2) Aquila, who is known for his woodenly literal translation technique, reads λαϊον ακαενωθ ν (elaion ekkenōthen, "oil poured out") which reflects a passive participle functioning adjectivally, perhaps מוֹרֵק (muraq; Hophal participle ms from רִיק "to pour out"). This involves simple orthographic confusion between ת and ם. This might be reflected in Qumran because Baillet's restoration of 6QCant reads מרקהת מורקה (cited in BHS apparatus "c-c") which would be vocalized מִרְקַחַת מוֹרְקָה (mirqakhat murqah, "perfumed poured out"). However, Baillet's restoration is questioned by some scholars. (3) The BHS editors suggest emending MT תוֹרֵק (turaq) to the noun תַּמְרוּק (tamruq, "purification"), used for oil of purification (e.g., Esth 2:3, 9, 12); תַּמְרוּק שֶׁמֶן (shemen tamruq) would mean "oil of purification" or "purified oil." (4) A simpler solution is to take תוֹרֵק as a previously unrecognized noun that is related to the Ugaritic noun trq which refers to high grade cosmetic oil (UT 145.20; 19.371). This approach is adopted by one other translation: "Your name is like finest oil" (NJPS).

15 sn The similar sounding terms שֵׁם (shem, "name") and שֶׁמֶן (shemen, "perfume") create a wordplay (paronomasia).

16 sn The term עֲלֻמָּה ('almah, "young woman") refers to a young woman who is of marriageable age or a newly married young woman, usually before the birth of her first child (HALOT 835–36 s.v. עֲלֻמָּה; BDB 761 s.v. עֲלֻמָּה) (e.g., Gen 24:43; Exod 2:8; Ps 68:26; Prov 30:19; Song 1:3; 6:8; Isa 7:14). The only other use of the term "young women" (עֲלֻמוֹת) in the Song refers to the young women of Solomon's harem (Song 6:8). The root עלם denotes the basic idea of "youthful, strong, passionate" (HALOT 835 s.v. III עלם). While the term עֲלֻמָּה ("young woman") may be used in reference to a young woman who is a virgin, the term itself does not explicitly denote "virgin." The Hebrew term which explicitly denotes "virgin" is בְּתוּלָה (bétulah) which refers to a mature young woman without any sexual experience with men (e.g., Gen 24:16; Exod 22:15–16; Lev 21:3; Deut 22:23, 28; 32:25; Judg 12:12; 19:24; 2 Sam 13:2, 18; 1 Kgs 1:2; 2 Chr 36:17; Esth 2:2–3, 17, 19; Job 31:1; Pss 45:15; 78:63; 148:12; Isa 23:4; 62:5; Jer 2:32; 31:3; 51:22; Lam 1:4, 18; 2:10, 21; 5:11; Ezek 9:6; Joel 1:8; Amos 9:13; Zech 9:17 (HALOT 166–7 s.v. בְּתוּלָה; BDB 143 s.v. בְּתוּלָה). The related noun בְּתוּלִים (bétulim) means "state of virginity" (Lev 21:13; Judg 11:37–38; Ezek 23:3, 8; Sir 42:10) and "evidence of virginity" (Deut 22:14–15, 17, 20) (HALOT 167 s.v. בְּתוּלִים).

17 tn Heb "love."

### Shulammitte (or young woman)

Song 1:4 "Draw me after you and let us run together! The king has brought me into his chambers."

KJV Song of Solomon 1:4 Draw me, we will run after thee: the king hath brought me into his chambers: we will be glad and rejoice in thee, we will remember thy love more than wine: the upright love thee.

NKJ Song of Solomon 1:4 Draw me away! THE DAUGHTERS OF JERUSALEM We will run after you. THE

SHULAMITE The king has brought me into his chambers. THE DAUGHTERS OF JERUSALEM We will be glad and rejoice in you. We will remember your love more than wine. THE SHULAMITE Rightly do they love you.

NET Song of Solomon 1:4 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!

BGT Song of Solomon 1:4 ε λκυ σ ν σε π σω σου ε ς σ μ ν μ ρων σου δ ραμο μεν ε σ νεγκ ν με βασιλε ς ε ς τ ταμ ειον α το γαλλιασ μεθα κα ε φρανθ μεν ν σο γαπ σομεν μαστο ς σου π ρ ο νον ε θ της γ π η σ ν σε

LXE Song of Solomon 1:4 They have drawn thee: we will run after thee, for the smell of thine ointments: the king has brought me into closet: let us rejoice and be glad in thee; we will love thy breasts more than wine: righteousness loves thee.

CSB Song of Solomon 1:4 Take me with you-- let us hurry. Oh, that the king would bring me to his chambers. We will rejoice and be glad for you; we will praise your love more than wine. It is only right that they adore you.

ESV Song of Solomon 1:4 Draw me after you; let us run. The king has brought me into his chambers. We will exult and rejoice in you; we will extol your love more than wine; rightly do they love you.

NIV Song of Solomon 1:4 Take me away with you--let us hurry! Let the king bring me into his chambers. We rejoice and delight in you; we will praise your love more than wine. How right they are to adore you!

NLT Song of Solomon 1:4 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.

YLT Song of Solomon 1:4 Draw me: after thee we run, The king hath brought me into his inner chambers, We do joy and rejoice in thee, We mention thy loves more than wine, Uprightly they have loved thee!

NJB Song of Solomon 1:4 Draw me in your footsteps, let us run. The king has brought me into his rooms; you will be our joy and our gladness. We shall praise your love more than wine; how right it is to love you.

- King - Song 2:3-5, 3:4

**Draw** (imperative = command) **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).

**Bob Utley** - "**the king has brought me into his chambers**" This is literally "bed chamber" (BDB 293, KB 293 II, cf. Sol 3:4; Eccl. 10:20; Joel 2:16). This refers to Solomon's harem (cf. Sol 6:9). Some commentators (and I am one of them) who see Song of Songs related to the Syrian love songs (i.e., *wasfs*), note that in these love poems the bride and groom are called "king" and "queen."

**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.

**Bob Utley** - "**we. . .they**" It is very difficult to identify this group(s). It may be a chorus (NJB) or possibly the maidens of Sol 1:3, who might be identified with the daughters of Jerusalem (NKJV).

**Bob Utley** - **rejoice**" This term (BDB 162, KB 189, *Qal* cohortative) is common in Psalms, but used only here in Song of Songs. It often denotes Israel's rejoicing over God and His covenant faithfulness. So it is a powerful affirmation! Here it refers to sexual love (cf. Ps. 45:13-15). Robert Gordis, *The Song of Songs and Lamentations*, thinks Sol 3:6-11 is a wedding song similar to Psalm 45.

**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. ([Song of Solomon 1](#))

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

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

**ESV Study Bible (BORROW)** This is the first speech of the "others," who function like a chorus. They join the shepherdess in her praise for the shepherd (**you** is masculine) by picking up her words from Song 1:2. **They** probably refers back to the "virgins" of Song 1:3, who are presumably the same as the "daughters of Jerusalem" (Song 1:5).

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 Song 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.

**NET Notes** NET Draw me<sup>18</sup> after you; let us hurry!<sup>19</sup> May the king<sup>20</sup> bring<sup>21</sup> me into his<sup>22</sup> bedroom chambers!<sup>23</sup> 24 We will<sup>25</sup> rejoice and delight in you;<sup>26</sup> we will praise<sup>27</sup> your love more than wine. How rightly<sup>28</sup> the young women<sup>29</sup> adore you!

18 sn The verb מַשַׁךְ (mashakh, "draw") is a figurative expression (hypocatastasis) which draws an implied comparison between the physical acting of leading a person with the romantic action of leading a person in love. Elsewhere it is used figuratively of a master gently leading an animal with leather cords (Hos 11:4) and of a military victor leading his captives (Jer 31:3). The point of comparison might be that the woman wants to be the willing captive of the love of her beloved, that is, a willing prisoner of his love.

19 tn The three verbs in this line are a good example of heterosis of person, that is, a shift from 2nd person masculine singular to 1st person common plural to 3rd person masculine singular forms: מַשְׁכְּחֵנִי (mashékheni, "draw me!"; Qal imperative 2nd person masculine singular from מַשַׁךְ, mashakh, "to draw" + 1st person common singular suffix:), נָרוּצָה (narutsah, "let us run!"; Qal cohortative 1st person common plural from רוץ, ruts, "to run"), and הֵבִיאֵנִי (hevi'ani, "he has brought me" or "bring me!"; Hiphil perfect 3rd person masculine singular from בוא, bo', "to bring" + 1st person common singular suffix). Heterosis from second to third person occurs elsewhere in the Song in 1:2–3; 4:2; 6:6 (e.g., Gen 49:4; Deut 32:15; Ps 23:2–5; Isa 1:29; 42:20; 54:1; Jer 22:24; Amos 4:1; Micah 7:19; Lam 3:1).

20 tn Or "O king, bring me into your chambers!" The article on the noun הַמֶּלֶךְ (hammelekh, "the king") may be taken in two ways: (1) the particularizing use of the article: "The king" (e.g., NIV: "The king has brought me into his chambers") or (2) the vocative use of the article: "O king!" (NJPS margin: "O king, bring me into your chambers!") (For the vocative use of the article, see GKC 405 §126.e; Joüon 2:506–7 §137.f; R. J. Williams, Hebrew Syntax, 19, §89; IBHS 247 §13.5.2c). The syntactical classification of the article is dependent upon: (1) Whether the MT reading of the 3rd person masculine singular suffix on הַדְּבָרִי (khadarav, "his chambers") is retained or whether the text is emended to the 2nd person masculine singular suffix form הַדְּבָרְךָ (khadrekha, "your chamber") as reflected in Syriac (see textual note below). (2) Whether הֵבִיאֵנִי (hevi'ani, Hiphil perfect 3rd person masculine singular from בוא, bo', "to bring" + 1st person common singular suffix) is classified as a perfect of past action ("The king has brought me into his chambers") or a precative perfect ("O king, bring me into your chambers!") (see syntactical note below). (3) Whether the consonantal form הביאני should be vocalized as הֵבִיאֵנִי (hevi'ani, Hiphil perfect 3rd person masculine singular + 1st person common singular suffix) as preserved in MT or as הַבִּיאֵנִי (havi'eni, Hiphil imperative 2nd person masculine singular + 1st person common singular suffix) as reflected in Symmachus and Syriac (see textual note below).

21 tn Or "has brought me." The verb הֵבִיאֵנִי (hevi'ani, Hiphil perfect 3rd person masculine singular from בוא, bo', "to bring" + 1st person common singular suffix) may be classified in two ways: (1) perfect of past action: "The king has brought me into his chambers" or (2) precative perfect: "May the king bring me into his chambers!" (J. S.

Deere, “Song of Solomon,” BKCOT, 1012). While some older grammarians denied the existence of the precative (volitional) function of the perfect in Hebrew (e.g., S. R. Driver, *Tenses in Hebrew*, 25–26; GKC 312–13 §106.n, n. 2), its existence is accepted in more recent grammars (e.g., IBHS 494–95 §30.5.4d; Joüon 2:365 §112.k). While the perfect of past action is the more common use of the perfect, the context suggests the more rare precative. As IBHS 494–95 §30.5.4d notes, the precative can be recognized contextually by its parallelism with the other volitive forms. The parallelism of precative הַבִּיאֲנִי (“bring me!”) with the volitives in the two preceding parallel colons—מִשְׁכְּנִי (mashékheni, “draw me!”; Qal imperative 2nd person masculine singular from מִשַׁךְ, mashakh, “to draw” + 1st person common singular suffix:) and נְרוּצָה (narutsah, “let us run!”; Qal cohortative 1st person common plural from רוץ, ruts, “to run”)—favors the precative function of the perfect. The volitive function of consonantal הַבִּיאֲנִי is reflected in Syriac. The BHS editors suggest revocalizing MT to הַבִּיאֲנִי “bring me!” The precative function of the perfect הַבִּיאֲנִי may explain the origin of this variant vocalization tradition reflected in Syriac. In terms of connotation, the precative functions as a volitive as an example of the irreal modal or optative function of the perfect (IBHS 494–95 §30.5.4d; Joüon 2:365 §112.k). In contrast to the use of the irreal perfect for situations which the speaker expresses as a wish without expectation of fulfillment (contrary-to-fact situations, hypothetical assertions, and expressions of a wish that is not expected to be realized), the precative refers to situations the speaker expresses his desire for and expects to be realized (IBHS 494–95 §30.5.4d). It is used most often in contexts of prayers to God which the speakers expect to be answered (e.g., Pss 3:8; 22:22; 31:5–6). Here, she expresses her desire that her lover consummate their love in his bedroom chambers; she expects this desire to be realized one day (e.g., 4:1–5:1). There are, however, several problems with nuancing the form as a precative: (a) this would demand emending MT הַדְּרָיו (khadarav, “his chambers”) to הַדְּרָךְ (khadrekha, “your chamber[s]”)—which is, however, reflected by Syriac Peshitta and Symmachus, and (b) it would demand nuancing the article on הַמֶּלֶךְ (hammelekh) as a vocative (“O king!”).

22 tc The MT reads the 3rd person masculine singular suffix on a plural noun הַדְּרָיו (khadarav, “his chambers”). This is reflected in LXX, Targums, and Vulgate. However, the 2nd person masculine singular suffix on a singular noun הַדְּרָךְ (khadrekha, “your chambers”) is reflected by Syriac Peshitta and Symmachus. See preceding note on the text-critical significance of these variant readings.

23 tn The term הֶדֶר (kheder, “chamber”) is used frequently in reference to a bedroom (Gen 43:30; Judg 15:1; 16:9; 2 Sam 13:10; 1 Kgs 1:15; Ps 105:30; Isa 26:20). It refers explicitly to a bedroom when used with the noun מִשְׁכָּב (mishkav, “bed”) in the expression הֶדֶר מִשְׁכָּב “bedroom chamber” (Exod 7:28; 2 Sam 4:7; 2 Kgs 6:12; Eccl 10:20). The plural form הַדְּרָיו (khadarav, “his chambers”) functions as a plural of extension rather than a plural or number; it refers to one bedroom composed of several parts rather than referring to several different bedrooms. The expression “Bring me into your chambers” is a metonymy of cause for effect, that is, her desire for lovemaking in his bedroom chambers.

24 sn Normally in the Song, the person/gender of the pronouns and suffixes makes the identify of the speaker or addressee clear. However, there are several places in which there is grammatical ambiguity that makes it difficult to identify either the speaker or the addressee (e.g., 6:11–13; 7:9b). This is particularly true when 1st person common plural or 3rd person common plural verbs or suffixes are present (1:3[4]; 2:15; 5:1b; 8:8–9), as is the case in the three lines of 1:3b[4b]. There are four views to the identity of the speaker(s): (1) NASB attributes all three lines to the maidens, (2) NIV attributes the first two lines to the friends and the third line to the Beloved (= woman), (3) NJPS attributes all three lines to the Beloved, speaking throughout 1:2–4, and (4) The first line could be attributed to the young man speaking to his beloved, and the last two lines attributed to the Beloved who returns praise to him. The referents of the 1st person common plural cohortatives and the 2sg suffixes have been taken as: (1) the maidens of Jerusalem, mentioned in 1:4[5] and possibly referred to as the 3rd person common plural subject of אֶהְבֹּךָ (’ahevukha, “they love you”) in 1:3b[4b], using the 1st person common plural cohortatives in reference to themselves as they address her lover: “We (= maidens) will rejoice in you (= the young man).” (2) The Beloved using 1st person common plural cohortatives in a hortatory sense as she addresses her lover: “Let us (= the couple) rejoice in you (= the young man), let us praise your lovemaking ...” (3) The Beloved using the 1st person common plural cohortatives in reference to herself—there are examples in ancient Near Eastern love literature of the bride using 1st person common plural forms in reference to herself (S. N. Kramer, *The Sacred Marriage Rite*, 92, 99)—as she addresses the young man: “We (= I) will rejoice in you (= the young man).” Note: This problem is compounded by the ambiguity of the gender on בָּךְ (bakh, “in you”) which appears to be 2nd person feminine singular but may be 2nd person masculine singular in pause (see note below).

25 tn Alternately, “Let us rejoice and delight in you.” There is debate whether the cohortatives נִגִּילָה (nagilah, Qal cohortative 1st person common plural from גִּיל, gil, “to exult”), וְנִשְׂמְחָה (vénishmékhah, Qal cohortative 1st

person common plural from שמח, shamakh, “to rejoice”) and נזכרה (nazkirah, Hiphil cohortative 1st person common plural from זכר, zakhar, “to praise”) should be classified as (1) cohortatives of resolve, expressing the resolution or determination of the speakers to adopt or accomplish a course of action: “We will rejoice ... we will delight ... we will praise” (e.g., KJV, NASB, NIV) or (2) hortatory cohortatives, exhorting others to join in doing something: “Let us rejoice ... let us delight ... let us praise” (e.g., NJPS).

26 tn A shift occurs in 1:4 from 1st person common singular forms to 1st person common plural forms: “Draw me (מִשְׁכֵּנִי, mashékeni) ... Let us run (נִרוּצָה, narutsah) ... Bring me (הֵבִיאֵנִי, hev’ani) ... We will be glad (נִגִּילָה, nagilah) ... We will rejoice in you (וְנִשְׂמְחָה, vénishmékhah) ... We will remember (נִזְכֶּרָה, nazkirah) ... They love you (אֶהְבֹּךָ, ’ahevukha)...” Several translations and many commentators end the words of the Beloved at 1:4a and begin the words of the Friends in 1:4b and revert back to the words of the Beloved in 1:4c. The subject of the 1st person common plural forms may be the “young women” (עַלְמוֹת) previously mentioned in 1:3. This is supported by the fact that in 1:3 the Beloved says, “The young women love you” (עַלְמוֹת אֶהְבֹּךָ, ’alamot ’ahevukha) and in 1:4c she again says, “Rightly do they [the young women] love you” (מִישָׂרִים אֶהְבֹּךָ, mesharim ’ahevukha). On the other hand, in ANE love literature the bride often uses plural pronouns to refer to herself (S. N. Kramer, *The Sacred Marriage Rite*, 92, 99). Some commentators suggest that the young man is addressing his beloved because בָּךְ (bakh) appears to have a 2nd person feminine singular suffix. However, the suffix on בָּךְ is in pause (after the accent) therefore, the normal 2nd person masculine singular suffix בָּךְ has reduced to shewa. The parallelism with the 2nd person masculine singular suffix on דֹּדֶיךָ (dodekha, “your love”) supports the 2nd person masculine singular classification.

27 tn Alternately, “remember.” The verb נִזְכֶּרָה (nazkirah, Hiphil imperfect 1st person common plural from זָכַר, zakhar) is traditionally rendered “we will remember” (KJV), but is better nuanced “we will extol” (NASB) or “we will praise” (NIV). The verb זָכַר has a wide range of meanings: “to remember, call to mind” (Gen 8:1; Deut 24:9; Judg 8:34), “to name, mention” (Jer 20:9; 23:36; 31:20; Pss 63:7; 77:4), “to summon, command” (Nah 2:6), “to swear by” (Amos 6:10; 1 Chr 16:4), and “to praise, extol” (Exod 23:13; Josh 23:7; Pss 45:18; 71:16; Isa 26:13; 48:1; 62:6). The Hiphil stem has four denotations, and “to remember” is not one of them: (1) “to take to court,” (2) “to mention,” (3) “to make known,” and (4) “to praise, profess” (HALOT 269–70 s.v. זָכַר). NJPS offers a poetic nuance that plays upon the wine motif: “savoring it more than wine.”

28 tn Alternately, “The righteous love you.” Scholars debate whether מִישָׂרִים (mesharim) should be taken as a substantive (“the righteous”), abstract noun (“righteousness”), or adverb (“rightly”). The LXX’s εὐθυτῆς γάπησεν σε (euthutēs ēgapēsen, “righteousness loves you”) is awkward. The adverbial sense is preferred for several reasons: (1) The verb אֶהְבֹּךָ (’ahevuka, “they love you”) in 1:4c is repeated from 1:3c where it was used in reference to the maiden’s love for her lover. (2) There is no group designated as “the righteous” elsewhere in the Song. (3) To introduce an additional party into this poetic unit is unnecessary when it can be easily understood as a reference to the maidens of 1:3c.

29 tn Heb “they love you.” The words “the young women” do not appear in the Hebrew but are supplied in the translation for the sake of clarity. The shift from the 1st person common plural subjects in the three cohortatives—נִגִּילָה (nagilah, Qal cohortative 1st person common plural from גִּיל, gil, “to exult”), וְנִשְׂמְחָה (vénishmékhah, Qal cohortative 1st person common plural from שמח, shamakh, “to rejoice”), and נִזְכֶּרָה (nazkirah, Hiphil cohortative 1st person common plural from זָכַר, zakhar, “to praise”)—to the 3rd person common plural subject in the verb אֶהְבֹּךָ (’ahevukha, Qal perfect 3rd person common plural from אָהַב, ’ahev, “to love” + 2nd person masculine singular suffix) suggests to many scholars that a shift in speakers occurs at this point: the maidens praise the young man in the first two lines, while the Beloved affirms the appropriateness of their praise in the last line (e.g., NIV). However, the shift in person might simply be another example of heterosis of person (as already seen in 1:2–4a)—this time from first person to third person. Thus, the shift in grammatical person does not necessarily indicate a shift in speakers. It is possible that the maidens are speaking throughout all three lines, and that the third line should be nuanced, “How rightly we love you!”

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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** )

## Shulammite (or young woman)

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

KJV Song of Solomon 1:5 I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon.

NKJ Song of Solomon 1:5 I am dark, but lovely, O daughters of Jerusalem, Like the tents of Kedar, Like the curtains of Solomon.

NET Song of Solomon 1:5 I am dark but lovely, O maidens of Jerusalem, dark like the tents of Qedar, lovely like the tent curtains of Salmah.

BGT Song of Solomon 1:5 μ λαιν ε μι κα καλ θυγατ ρες Ιερουσαλημ ς σκην ματα Κηδαρ ς ὄ ρρεις Σαλωμων

LXE Song of Solomon 1:5 I am black, but beautiful, ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon.

CSB Song of Solomon 1:5 Daughters of Jerusalem, I am dark like the tents of Kedar, yet lovely like the curtains of Solomon.

ESV Song of Solomon 1:5 I am very dark, but lovely, O daughters of Jerusalem, like the tents of Kedar, like the curtains of Solomon.

NIV Song of Solomon 1:5 Dark am I, yet lovely, O daughters of Jerusalem, dark like the tents of Kedar, like the tent curtains of Solomon.

NLT Song of Solomon 1:5 I am dark but beautiful, O women of Jerusalem-- dark as the tents of Kedar, dark as the curtains of Solomon's tents.

YLT Song of Solomon 1:5 Dark am I, and comely, daughters of Jerusalem, As tents of Kedar, as curtains of Solomon.

NJB Song of Solomon 1:5 BELOVED: I am black but lovely, daughters of Jerusalem, like the tents of Kedar, like the pavilions of Salmah.

NRS Song of Solomon 1:5 I am black and beautiful, O daughters of Jerusalem, like the tents of Kedar, like the curtains of Solomon.

RSV Song of Solomon 1:5 I am very dark, but comely, O daughters of Jerusalem, like the tents of Kedar, like the curtains of Solomon.

NAB Song of Solomon 1:5 B I am as dark-- but lovely, O daughters of Jerusalem- As the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Salma.

GWN Song of Solomon 1:5 Young women of Jerusalem, I am dark and lovely like Kedar's tents, like Solomon's curtains.

## BLACK BUT BEAUTIFUL

**Black but lovely...like the tents of [Kedar](#)** - 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.

**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.

**Temper Longman III** - 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). (See [Job, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs - Page 348](#))

- [What is the significance of Kedar in the Bible? | GotQuestions.org](#)

**Song 1:5 - Tent Material Picture: Tent Material** The Bedouin's home is his tent, which is made of black goat's hair. He calls it *beit sha'ar*, i.e., "house of hair." It is made of coarse, heavy fabric, and serves to protect the family in winter from the cold winds; in the summer the sides are usually lifted, and the tent serves as a sunshade. This goat's hair cloth that is used in making these tents is porous when it is dry, but becomes waterproof after the first rains have shrunk it together. The Song of Solomon refers to these black goat's hair tents thus: "I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar" (Cant 1:5). [Manners and Customs of Bible Lands](#)

**Bob Utley** - "Like the curtains of Solomon" This is obviously parallel to "tents of Kedar." The question is, what curtain does it refer to: Solomon's palace (TEV), Solomon's travelling tent (NJB) or the temple in Jerusalem. here is just not enough information in the text to make a determination. Also, it is possible that the color is not the parallel, but "dark. . .beautiful," whereby the "curtains of Solomon" are not dark, but beautiful (cf. TEV). Notice that the NJB has "Salmah," NAB has "Salma," and REB has "Shalmah." This comes from a supposed tribe in the area of Edom, possibly close to Kedar. However, there is no textual support or ancient version support for this textual change.

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! ([Song of Solomon 1](#))

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**NET Notes** NET = 5 I am dark but lovely, O maidens<sup>30</sup> of Jerusalem, dark<sup>31</sup> like the tents of Qedar,<sup>32</sup> lovely<sup>33</sup> like the tent curtains<sup>34</sup> of Salmah.<sup>35</sup>

30 tn Heb “O daughters of Jerusalem.”

31 sn The term “dark” does not appear in the Hebrew in this line but is supplied in the translation from the preceding line for the sake of clarity. The poetic structure of this tricolon is an example of redistribution. The terms “black but beautiful” in the A-line are broken up—the B-line picks up on “black” and the C-line picks up on “beautiful.” The Beloved was “black” like the rugged tents of Qedar woven from the wool of black goats, but “beautiful” as the decorative inner tent-curtains of King Solomon (J. L. Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry*, 40; W. G. E. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry* [JSOTSup], 181).

32 sn 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 שְׁחֹרָה (shékhorah, “black”) and קֶדָר (qedar, “Qedar”) create a wordplay because the root קָדַר (qadar) means “dark, dirty” (HALOT 1072 s.v. קָדַר). 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 1:6 states.

33 tn The term “lovely” does not appear in the Hebrew in this line but is supplied in the translation from the first line in this verse for the sake of clarity.

34 sn There is debate whether the terms “tents” אֹהֶלִי (’ahale, “tents”) and יְרִיעוֹת (yéri’ot, “tent-curtains”) used here as synonyms or antonyms. The term אֹהֶל (’ohel, “tent”) is often used in reference to an overall tent assembly, with particular emphasis on the external structure (e.g., Gen 4:20; 18:1; 31:33; Exod 26:13; 40:19; Judg 4:17; Isa 54:2; Jer 37:10) (HALOT 19 s.v. אֹהֶל). The term “tent-curtains” (יְרִיעוֹת) is used to refer to (1) inner hanging curtains, such as decorative hangings or tapestries inside a tent (e.g., Exod 26:1–2, 7; Num 4:25) and (2) a tent as a whole (e.g., 2 Sam 7:2; Jer 4:20; 10:20; Hab 3:7) (HALOT 439 s.v. יְרִיעוֹת). The two terms are often used in parallelism as an A-B word pair (Isa 54:2; Jer 4:20; 10:20; 49:29; Hab 3:7). Like the “tents” (אֹהֶלִים) of Qedar which were made from the wool of black goats, “tent-curtains” (יְרִיעוֹת) also were sometimes made from goat hair (Exod 26:7). If the two are synonymous, the point is that the tents of Qedar and the tent-curtains of Salmah were both black but beautiful. If the two terms are antonyms, the point is that the tents of Qedar are black but the tent-curtains of Salmah are beautiful. In either case, her point is that she is black, but nonetheless beautiful. Rabbinic midrash misses the point; it views the metaphor as contrasting her swarthy outward appearance with her inner beauty: “Just as the tents of Kedar, although from outside they look ugly, black, and ragged, yet inside contain precious stones and pearls, so the disciples of the wise, although they look repulsive and swarthy in this world, yet have within them knowledge of the Torah, Scriptures, Mishnah, Midrash, Halachoth, Talmud, Toseftas and Haggadah” (Midrash Rabbah 4:54–55).

35 tc The MT vocalizes שְׁלֹמֹה as שְׁלֹמֹה (shélmoh, “Solomon”); however, the BHS editors suggest the vocalization שְׁלִמָּה (shalmah); cf. NAB “Salma.” Salmah is the name of an ancient Arabian tribe mentioned in Assyrian and South Arabic sources, as well as Targum Onqelos (Gen 15:19; Num 24:21; Judg 4:17). Like the tribe of Qedar, Salmah was an Arabian nomadic tribe which inhabited a region in northern Arabia and the region of Petra. The proposed revocalization produces tighter parallelism between Qedar and Salmah, than Qedar and Solomon. This also creates a striking wordplay on the name שְׁלֹמֹה (M. H. Pope, *Song of Songs* [AB], 320).

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**QUESTION - [Who are the daughters of Jerusalem in Song of Solomon? GOTQUESTIONS.ORG](#)**

**ANSWER** - The “daughters of Jerusalem” are mentioned seven times in the [Song of Solomon](#). These persons are obviously female, but who exactly are they?

The most likely identification of the daughters of Jerusalem is that they were the young, unmarried women of Jerusalem, the city where Solomon lived. Some translations say “maidens,” “virgins,” or “young women” instead of “daughters.” A look at this term’s use in the book helps to strengthen this interpretation. In Song of Solomon 1:5 the Shulammitte states, “Dark am I, yet lovely, / daughters

of Jerusalem.” In contrast with the “dark” skin of Solomon’s lover, it seems that the daughters of Jerusalem were lighter-skinned. This may indicate the daughters of Jerusalem were more affluent or worked indoors, since the Shulammitte attributes her dark skin to working in the heat of the sun (Song 1:6).

Song of Solomon 2:7 says, “Daughters of Jerusalem, I charge you / by the gazelles and by the does of the field: / Do not arouse or awaken love / until it so desires.” This is an important passage in the book, since the command not to “awaken love” is repeated twice elsewhere. Again, the Shulammitte addresses the other women of the area, advising them not to force love until the appropriate time—love comes when it comes. This same command is also seen when the daughters of Jerusalem are mentioned in Song of Solomon 3:5 and Song 8:4. The Shulammitte is giving her advice to the other girls in town.

In Song of Solomon 3:10–11, the Shulammitte again speaks to the young girls of Jerusalem: “Daughters of Jerusalem, come out, / and look, you daughters of Zion. / Look on King Solomon wearing a crown, / the crown with which his mother crowned him / on the day of his wedding, / the day his heart rejoiced.” The context speaks of a royal carriage Solomon had made (Song 3:9). Some translations indicate that the interior of Solomon’s carriage was decorated “by the daughters of Jerusalem” (e.g., NASB, ESV, NET, ISV). This may give us an additional clue: the daughters of Jerusalem could be the female household servants of [King Solomon](#).

Song of Solomon 5:8 also mentions the daughters of Jerusalem, saying, “Daughters of Jerusalem, I charge you— / if you find my beloved, / what will you tell him? / Tell him I am faint with love.” This charge to the daughters of Jerusalem also supports the idea that they were household servants. If they happen to see the king during the day, they are called on to report the status of Solomon’s new wife as being lovesick and wanting to be with him.

Song of Solomon 5:16 ends a description of Solomon with “he is altogether lovely. / This is my beloved, this is my friend, / daughters of Jerusalem.” The Shulammitte’s husband is both her lover and her friend, something she declares openly to the young women of the city.

There are several places in the song that are spoken by a group of people in response to what Solomon and the Shulammitte say (Song of Solomon 1:4, 11; 5:9; 6:13; et al.). The speakers could very well be the **daughters of Jerusalem** whom the Shulammitte addresses so often.

In the New Testament, Jesus speaks to a group of women whom He calls “daughters of Jerusalem” on one occasion. As Jesus carried His cross to Calvary, many women followed in mourning. He says to them, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children” (Luke 23:28). Jesus was speaking generally to all the women in the city of Jerusalem and specifically to those near Him.

The daughters of Jerusalem play a small but important role in the Song of Solomon. As the young maidens of the city listened to advice from Solomon’s wife, they received wisdom about romance. If they were indeed servants in Solomon’s household, they would have been a natural audience as they made preparations for the wedding and waited on their new queen.

### 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.**

KJV Song of Solomon 1:6 Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me: my mother's children were angry with me; they made me the keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept.

NKJ Song of Solomon 1:6 Do not look upon me, because I am dark, Because the sun has tanned me. My mother's sons were angry with me; They made me the keeper of the vineyards, But my own vineyard I have not kept.

NET Song of Solomon 1:6 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!

BGT Song of Solomon 1:6 μ βλ ψητ με τι γ ε μι μεμελανωμ νη τι παρ βλεψ ν με λιος υ ο μητρ ς μου μαχ σαντο ν μο θεντ με φυλ κισσαν ν μπελ σιν μπελ να μ ν ο κ φ λαξα

LXE Song of Solomon 1:6 Look not upon me, because I am dark, because the sun has looked unfavourably upon me: my mother's sons strove with me; they made me keeper in the vineyards; I have not kept my own vineyard.

CSB Song of Solomon 1:6 Do not stare at me because I am dark, for the sun has gazed on me. My mother's



sons were angry with me; they made me a keeper of the vineyards. I have not kept my own vineyard.

ESV Song of Solomon 1:6 Do not gaze at me because I am dark, because the sun has looked upon me. My mother's sons were angry with me; they made me keeper of the vineyards, but my own vineyard I have not kept!

NIV Song of Solomon 1:6 Do not stare at me because I am dark, because I am darkened by the sun. My mother's sons were angry with me and made me take care of the vineyards; my own vineyard I have neglected.

NLT Song of Solomon 1:6 Don't stare at me because I am dark-- the sun has darkened my skin. My brothers were angry with me; they forced me to care for their vineyards, so I couldn't care for myself-- my own vineyard.

YLT Song of Solomon 1:6 Fear me not, because I am very dark, Because the sun hath scorched me, The sons of my mother were angry with me, They made me keeper of the vineyards, My vineyard -- my own -- I have not kept.

NJB Song of Solomon 1:6 Take no notice of my dark colouring, it is the sun that has burnt me. My mother's sons turned their anger on me, they made me look after the vineyards. My own vineyard I had not looked after!

NRS Song of Solomon 1:6 Do not gaze at me because I am dark, because the sun has gazed on me. My mother's sons were angry with me; they made me keeper of the vineyards, but my own vineyard I have not kept!

RSV Song of Solomon 1:6 Do not gaze at me because I am swarthy, because the sun has scorched me. My mother's sons were angry with me, they made me keeper of the vineyards; but, my own vineyard I have not kept!

NAB Song of Solomon 1:6 Do not stare at me because I am swarthy, because the sun has burned me. My brothers have been angry with me; they charged me with the care of the vineyards: my own vineyard I have not cared for.

GWN Song of Solomon 1:6 Stop staring at me because I am so dark. The sun has tanned me. My brothers were angry with me. They made me the caretaker of the vineyards. I have not even taken care of my own vineyard.

- **Caretaker** - Song 8:11,12

## **STOP STARING BECAUSE I AM DARK**

**Do not stare at me because I am swarthy** (of a dark color, complexion), **for** (term of explanation) **the sun has burned me.**

**Bob Utley** - It is difficult to follow who is speaking and to whom they are speaking. The transitions are not clearly (textually) marked. In Sol 1:5-6 a northern woman is addressing apparent concerns of the Jerusalem harem or the women of the court. **"I am black"** Sol 1:6 describes this as a deep tan ("blackish," BDB 1007, KB 1457), which she received from the sun while tending the family vineyards and flocks (i.e., Peshitta, "dark skin"). Usually harem women strived to be as white as possible (i.e., book of Esther).

**Bob Utley** - **"do not stare at me"** This can be understood in one of two ways: Her dark tan was seen by the daughters of Jerusalem as reflecting her poor, rural background, and lack of light skin (TEV, NIDOTTE, vol. 3, p. 1009). Her dark tan and beauty caused them to stare at her in awe and envy.

**Brian Bell** - Tan was looked down upon – a worker in the sun. ([Song of Solomon 1](#))

**Temper 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. (See [Job, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs - Page 348](#))

**Tommy Nelson** - If your relationship is built on a foundation of physical attraction, you will have constant insecurity that the foundation will crumble. After all, if you are getting married for looks, when you get married, that's probably the most beautiful physically you're ever going to be in your life. It's all downhill after that. Woe!

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**Bob Utley** - **"My mother's sons were angry with me"** The VERB can be from one of two roots that mean "to burn" ("with anger"):



1. חרר, BDB 354, KB 351, *Niphal* PERFECT, cf. Isa. 41:11; 45:24
2. חרה, BDB 359, *Niphal* PERFECT, cf. Ps. 69:4; Ezek. 15:4,5

Number 1 is more probably the correct root. It is interesting that the root חנר (BDB 637) literally means "to snort" and developed metaphorically to denote anger.

The interpretation of this verse is crucial to the understanding of the book (cf. Sol 6:9). As in all other passages there are several theories:

1. the brothers are jealous of the king's favour
2. this reflects a family feud over the young girl's chastity (line 5)
3. the young girl did not take enough time for herself (TEV)
4. she has given her heart to another (i.e., a northern local lover)

### **Prioritizing Physical Attraction**

#### **Promises Insecurity**

- Prioritizing Physical Attraction Leads to Comparing, Critiquing, and Competition.
- Prioritizing Physical Attraction Develops Insecurity in Relationships.
- Prioritizing Physical Attraction Creates Suspicion and Uncertainty in Relationships

**NET Notes** NET = Do not stare at me because<sup>36</sup> I am dark, for<sup>37</sup> the sun has burned my skin.<sup>38</sup> My brothers<sup>39</sup> were angry<sup>40</sup> with me; they made me the keeper of the vineyards. Alas, my own vineyard<sup>41</sup> I could not keep!<sup>42</sup>

36 tn The relative pronoun שְׁ (she) on שֶׁאֲנִי (she'ani, "because I") functions in a causal sense, as in the following colon (BDB 980 s.v. 3 שְׁ.b) (e.g., Song 5:2; Eccl 2:18).

37 tn The relative pronoun שְׁ (she) on שֶׁשֶׁשְׁזַפַּתְנִי (sheshshezafatni) functions in a causal sense, as in the preceding colon (BDB 980 s.v. 3 שְׁ.b) (e.g., Song 5:2; Eccl 2:18).

38 tn Heb "the sun has stared at me." The verb שָׁזַף (shazaf) means "to look at, catch sight of, glance at" (e.g., Job 20:9; 28:7) (HALOT 1456 s.v. שָׁזַף; BDB 1004 s.v. שָׁזַף). The Beloved personifies the sun (שֶׁשְׁמֶשׁ, hashshamesh) as having looked at the Beloved too long, that is, it burned her skin.

39 tn Heb "the sons of my mother."

40 sn The verb הָרַה (harah, "to burn in anger, to be angry") creates an interesting wordplay or pun on the preceding line: "The sun burned me (= my skin)." The sun burned her skin, because her brothers had burned (נִהָרוּ, niharu) in anger against her. This is an example of a polysemantic wordplay which explains the two basic meanings of הָרַה ("to burn, to be angry") (W. G. E. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry* [JSOTSup], 241–42).

41 sn The noun כֶּרֶם (kerem, "vineyard") is used figuratively in this line (see following note on the wordplays in this verse). Some suggest that her "vineyard" refers to her virginity, that is, she lost her virginity. However, this runs contrary to the moral purity accorded to the Beloved throughout the Song (e.g., 4:12; 8:8–10). It is better to take the "vineyard" imagery as a reference to her ability to take care of her physical appearance which had been thwarted by being forced to work outside where her skin had been darkened by the scorching rays of the sun, as alluded to throughout 1:4–5[5–6].

42 sn The repetition of the noun כֶּרֶם (kerem, "vineyard") and the verb נָטַר (natar, "to keep, maintain") creates a series of eloquent wordplays. The first occurrence of כֶּרֶם ("vineyard") and נָטַר ("to keep") is literal, the second occurrence of both is figurative (hypocatastasis). Her brothers forced her to work outside in the sun, taking care of the vineyards; as a result, she was not able to take care of her appearance ("my own vineyard I could not keep").

**QUESTION - [What does it mean that the Shulammitte had dark skin \(Song of Solomon 1:6\)? GOTQUESTIONS.ORG](#)**

**ANSWER -** The [Shulammitte](#), the woman Solomon loves, refers to herself as having dark skin: "Do not gaze at me because I am dark" (Song of Solomon 1:6, ESV). In the NASB, she is "swarthy"; in the KJV, she is "black."

Some have suggested that the Shulammitte woman was a dark-skinned woman, perhaps of African descent. However, a more likely

answer is found in the very same verse. Immediately following the mention of the woman as “dark,” we read, “Because the sun has looked upon me” (ESV). In the NIV, it’s clearer what she means: “Because I am darkened by the sun.” And the rest of the verse explains why the Shulammitte was in the sun: “My mother’s sons were angry with me / and made me take care of the vineyards; / my own vineyard I had to neglect” In other words, she was forced to work outside in the sun and had not taken care of her skin as she preferred.

In modern Western culture, many women go to great lengths to tan and darken their skin. However, the opposite was true of women in the ancient Near East. Dark or tanned skin was undesirable because it indicated a woman had spent significant time working in the sun, something that servants or poor women did. More affluent women would not labor in the sun; they would stay indoors more or have nicer clothing that covered their skin.

The Shulammitte woman did not want to be stared at because of her tanned skin. In Song of Solomon 1:5 we read, “Dark am I, yet lovely, / daughters of Jerusalem, / dark like the tents of Kedar, / like the tent curtains of Solomon.” The tents of [Kedar](#) were made from the wool of black goats. *The curtains of Solomon* is a difficult phrase to render from the Hebrew text. Many believe the correct understanding is instead “the tents of Salma.” If so, the word picture is fitting. The Salma people lived in the same general region as Kedar and likely also constructed their tents with black wool. Otherwise, the curtains of Solomon were likely purple, the color of royalty, a color that would not fit the description in verse 6. Regardless, the Shulammitte is telling the other women not to think poorly of her because of her tanned skin.

Some have also sought meaning in [Song of Solomon 1:6](#) based on the identity of Shulammitte. The term *Shulammitte* has been interpreted in different ways. Two of the most likely interpretations are that *Shulammitte* means “O perfect one” or that it refers to an area called Shunem (as the LXX chooses). If this latter interpretation is correct, the Shulammitte was from Shunem, a village near Jezreel inhabited by the Jews during Solomon’s time. The woman would likely have had an olive complexion, though darker than some due to her working out of doors.

Though the woman in Song of Solomon had some concerns about her appearance, she was clearly loved by Solomon and desired by him. The Song of Solomon offers a great example of how, though imperfect, a man and woman accept and love one another unconditionally and pursue love and intimacy in the context of marriage.

### Shulammitte (or young woman)

**Songs 1:7 "Tell me, O you whom my soul loves, Where do you pasture (feed, tend) 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?"**

KJV Song of Solomon 1:7 Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions?

NKJ Song of Solomon 1:7 (TO HER BELOVED) Tell me, O you whom I love, Where you feed your flock, Where you make it rest at noon. For why should I be as one who veils herself By the flocks of your companions?

NET Song of Solomon 1:7 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!

BGT Song of Solomon 1:7 π γγειλ ν μοι ν γ πησεν ψυχ μου πο ποιμα νεις πο κοιτ ζεις ν μεσημβρ μ ποτε γ νωμαι ς περιβαλλομ νη π γ λαις τα ρων σου

LXE Song of Solomon 1:7 Tell me, thou whom my soul loves, where thou tendest thy flock, where thou causest them to rest at noon, lest I become as one that is veiled by the flocks of thy companions.

CSB Song of Solomon 1:7 Tell me, you, the one I love: Where do you pasture your sheep? Where do you let them rest at noon? Why should I be like one who veils herself beside the flocks of your companions?

ESV Song of Solomon 1:7 Tell me, you whom my soul loves, where you pasture your flock, where you make it lie down at noon; for why should I be like one who veils herself beside the flocks of your companions?

NIV Song of Solomon 1:7 Tell me, you whom I love, where you graze your flock and where you rest your sheep at midday. Why should I be like a veiled woman beside the flocks of your friends?

NLT Song of Solomon 1:7 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? Young Man

YLT Song of Solomon 1:7 Declare to me, thou whom my soul hath loved, Where thou delightest, Where thou liest down at noon, For why am I as one veiled, By the ranks of thy companions?

NJB Song of Solomon 1:7 Tell me then, sweetheart, where will you lead your flock to graze, where will you rest it at noon? That I may no more wander like a vagabond beside the flocks of your companions.

NRS Song of Solomon 1:7 Tell me, you whom my soul loves, where you pasture your flock, where you make it lie down at noon; for why should I be like one who is veiled beside the flocks of your companions?

RSV Song of Solomon 1:7 Tell me, you whom my soul loves, where you pasture your flock, where you make it lie down at noon; for why should I be like one who wanders beside the flocks of your companions?

NAB Song of Solomon 1:7 B Tell me, you whom my heart loves, where you pasture your flock, where you give them rest at midday, Lest I be found wandering after the flocks of your companions.

GWN Song of Solomon 1:7 Please tell me, you whom I love, where do you graze your flock? Where does your flock lie down at noon? Tell me, or I will be considered a prostitute wandering among the flocks of your companions.

- **O you** - Song 2:3 Song 3:1-4, 5:8,10,16
- **You** - Song 1:15, Song 2:10, Song 4:1,7,10 Song 5:9 Song 6:1,4-10 Song 7:1-13

**Tell** (imperative = command) **me, O you whom my soul loves, 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).

**Bob Utley** - "you who my soul loves" To whom does this refer? It depends on one's understanding of how many characters are involved in this poetic/musical drama. The two theories are: (1) the girl's hometown shepherd boyfriend from the North (2) Solomon himself from Jerusalem (i.e., shepherd of Israel)

**Where do you make it lie down at noon?**

**Bob Utley** - **Where do you make it lie down at noon**" This may refer to: (1) Solomon's travelling pavilion, thereby: "tents" of Sol 1:6 "companions" of Sol 1:7, line 5 and 8:13 or (2) to a local shepherd whom she loves. There is the added sexual imagery of "lying down," implying, "I want to come lie down with you." Poetry carries connotations and implications with its choice of words and their various connotations.

**ESV Study** note on **noon** - **Noon** is the time to rest, providing an opportunity to meet. ([Borrow](#))

**Whom my soul loves** ([ahab/ahab](#)) - 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.

**Temper Longman III** - 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. (See [Job, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs - Page 348](#))

**For why should I be like one who veils herself beside the flocks of your companions?NLT** - "For why should I wander like a prostitute among your friends and their flocks?"

**Bob Utley** - **veils herself** The MT has the PARTICIPLE "wrapping" (BDB 741 I, KB 813, Qal ACTIVE PARTICIPLE). The UBS Text Project, p. 600, gives this option a "B" rating (some doubt). However, it mentions a second option, "wanders" (BDB 380, transposes first two consonants). Both suggestions would be an allusion to a prostitute. There are other interpretive suggestions of the imagery. her modesty, her premarital desires, her request that her lover does not associate with traveling prostitutes (i.e., Gen. 38:14-19)

**Song 1:7 - How Goats Differ From Sheep.** Most of the Palestinian and Syrian sheep are white, whereas most of the goats are black. The goats like the slopes of the rocky mountains, whereas the sheep prefer the plains or mountain valleys. The goats are especially fond of young leaves of trees, but the sheep would rather have grass. Goats will feed during all the day without the heat of summer affecting them; but when the sunshine is hot, the sheep will lie down under a tree, or in the shade of a rock, or in a rude shelter prepared by the shepherd for that purpose. Song of Solomon makes mention of this rest time for the sheep: "Tell me, O thou

whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon" (Cant. 1:7). The goats are bolder, more venturesome, more playful, more apt to clamber to dangerous places, more apt to break into the grainfields, more headstrong, more vigorous, and more difficult to control than are the sheep. [Manners and Customs of Bible Lands](#)

**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. (See [Job, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs - Page 348](#))

**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!" ([Song of Solomon 1](#))

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**Love** (friend) (0157) [ahab/ahab](#) means to love. It is an all-encompassing love that meets all of her desires (not simply sexual; cf. 1Sa 20:17).

Ahab/ahab can convey the idea of liking things (like bribes - Isa 1:23, wisdom - Pr 4:6, wine - Pr 21:17, peace and truth - Zech 8:19, food - Ge 27:4, 9, 14). The most important uses in the OT are as an expression of God's love of people (Dt 4:37, Hosea 3:1), man's love for God (Ex 20:6, Ps 116:1) and man's love for his fellow man (Ge 29:32, Ru 4:15-note, 1 Kings 11:1 = a *forbidden* love by backslidden King Solomon!!!) The first use of ahab in the OT is instructive as it is found in Ge 22:2 where Yahweh instructed his servant Abraham to ""Take now your son, your only son, whom you **love**, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah; and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you." Notice that at the outset, we see that an inherent quality of this love (in many contexts) is that it is costly. God wants us to love Him above EVERYTHING, even our own flesh and blood. Matthews writes that Ge 22:2 "is the final test of the man's faith, the closing bookend to his discovery of God's sufficiency to achieve the promises made at Haran." (New American Commentary) As an aside God frequently "tests" His people to reveal their trust and obedience (cp Ex 15:25, 16:4, Judges 2:22-note - in this last one they failed repeatedly). In Ge 25:28 there is a hint that Isaac's love was at least somewhat conditioned on the fact that Esau provided game for him to eat (cp Ge 27:4, 9, 14 of Isaac's love for the savory dish). In addition, Isaac's love for Esau is contrasted with Rebekah's love for Jacob (not to say of course that Isaac did not love Jacob but that he seemed to have a greater degree for Esau because he was as they say "a man's man!" Compare Jacob's greater love for Rachel than Leah - Ge 29:30, Jacob's greater love for Joseph - Ge 37:3,4) In Ex 21:5 we see one of the great examples of man to man love where a slave willingly stays with his master because he loves him -- now that is surely sacrificial love! In Dt 4:37 we see the first use of ahab to describe God's unconditional love for His chosen people Israel -- He loved them then, He continued to love them in their unfaithfulness (because that is the nature of true love) and He will bring them "from Egypt" (so to speak) at the end of this age when Messiah returns and all the believing remnant are saved (Ro 11:25-27-note)! In short, God's love transcends time and endures throughout eternity for His chosen people and for every Gentile that has been grafted into "the rich root of the olive tree," (Ro 11:17-note). In [the Shema](#) Israel is instructed ""You shall **love** the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might." (Dt 6:5)

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**NET Notes** NET = Tell me, O you whom my heart<sup>43</sup> loves, where do you pasture your sheep? Where do you rest your sheep during the midday heat? Tell me lest<sup>44</sup> I wander around<sup>45</sup> beside the flocks of your companions!

43 tn Heb "soul."

44 tn The causal relative pronoun *שֶׁ* (she, "because"; BDB 980 s.v. 3 *שֶׁ*.b) is prefixed to the interrogative particle *לָמָּה* (lamah, "why?"; BDB 554 s.v. 4 *לָמָּה*.d) to form the idiom *שֶׁלָּמָּה* (shallamah, "lest"; BDB 554 s.v. *לָמָּה*.d.β; 980 s.v. 3 *שֶׁ*.b). BDB notes that *לָמָּה* is used with an imperfect—as is the case here with *הֵיחָדֵי* ('ehyeh, Qal imperfect 1st person common singular from *הָיָה*, haya, "to be")—to deprecate a situation and for rhetorical emphasis to introduce the reason why something should, or should not, be done: "Why should?" (e.g., Gen 27:45; 47:19; Exod 32:12; 1 Sam 19:5, 17; 20:8, 32; 2 Sam 2:22; 13:26; 16:9; 20:19; 2 Kgs 14:10; 2 Chr 25:16; Neh 6:3; Pss 79:10; 115:2; Eccl 5:5; 7:16–17; Jer 40:15; Joel 2:17) (BDB 554 s.v. 4 *לָמָּה*.d.β). When connected with a foregoing sentence by the causal relative pronouns *שֶׁ* "because," the idiom *שֶׁלָּמָּה* connotes

“lest” (literally, “Because why should?”) (BDB 554 s.v. 4.d.β). The meaning of לִמָּחֵשׁ is identical to the parallel constructions לָמָּחֵשׁ אֲשֶׁר לָמָּחֵשׁ (‘asher lammah, “lest”; Dan 1:10) and לִמָּחֵשׁ דִּי (di lámah, “lest”; Ezra 7:23). In Song 1:6[7] the causal relative pronoun שֶׁ connects it to the preceding lines, and our idiom assumes the elided phrase לִי הַגִּידָהּ (haggidah li, “Tell me!”) which occurred earlier: “Tell me lest I ...!” or “Tell me! For why should I ...?”

45 tn The meaning of MT עֹטְיָהּ (‘otéyah, Qal active participle fs from עָטָה, ‘atah, “to veil oneself”) is debated; several options have been proposed: (1) Some scholars attempt to explain this in light of ancient Israelite culture or customs. The term עָטָה describes a person wrapping oneself in a garment or with a veil (HALOT 813 s.v. I עטה) as (a) a sign of grief or mourning (Ezek 24:17, 22), uncleanness (Lev 13:45), or shame (Mic 3:7), and as (b) the clothing of the deceased (1 Sam 28:14) and veiled cult-prostitutes (Gen 28:14). The term is rendered “one who veils herself” (NASB), “one who is veiled” (NRSV, KJV margin) and “like a veiled woman” (ASV, NIV). BDB suggests that she veiled herself in mourning (BDB 741 s.v. I עָטָה). Rashi suggested that she veiled herself in mourning because she did not know where to find her beloved (Canticles Rabbah 1:6). Many commentators connect this with the veiled cult-prostitute soliciting business among shepherds. She wished to avoid what Tamar tried to do: to be mistaken as a harlot looking for business among the shepherds (Gen 38:14–23). If her beloved would not declare his whereabouts, she would be reduced to looking for him among the shepherds—an action that could be easily misunderstood. This is reflected in the CEV paraphrase: “Don’t let the other shepherds think badly of me.” R. E. Murphy (Song of Songs [Hermeneia], 131) writes: “Commentators have interpreted the covering as a sign of mourning (2 Sam 15:30) or as the sign of a harlot (Gen 38:14–15). These references are not helpful in explaining the context of v 7, and in neither of the instances is the word עָטָה used. She seems rather to refer to some kind of covering or disguise she will be forced to use unless she knows where to find him. One can infer that the disguise will enable her to avoid being identified by his ‘companions,’ but no reason is given (perhaps she does not want them to know about the rendezvous?)” (2) Other scholars resort to comparative lexicography. For example, S. R. Driver suggested that עֹטְיָהּ is not derived from עָטָה I (“to veil”), but from the Arabic root gth that came into Hebrew as the homonymic root עָטָה “to pick lice” (Isa 22:17; Jer 43:12) (HALOT 814 s.v. II עטה). Driver renders the line, “lest I be left picking lice,” that is, while away the siesta-time grooming herself. Most scholars reject this proposal; it seems strange in the context and unnecessarily creates a homonym for a well-known term that makes adequate sense contextually. Nevertheless, Driver’s proposal was adopted by the NEB: “that I may not be left picking lice.” See D. R. Driver, “Lice in the Old Testament,” PEQ 106 (1974): 159–160. (3) Still other scholars emend the text. MT reads עֹטְיָהּ כְּ (ké’otéyah, “like one who is veiled”) (preposition כְּ + Qal active participle fs עָטָה I “to veil”) which is also reflected in the LXX’s περιβαλλομένη (ō periballomenē, “like one who is covered”; fs passive participle from περιβάλλω, periballō, “to cover”). However, several ancient versions (Greek: Symmachus, Syriac Peshitta, Vulgate) reflect a Hebrew Vorlage with metathesis of the first two consonants: עֹטְיָהּ (kéto’yiyah) from עָטָה (ta’ah, “to wander about, to stray”; e.g., Ezek 13:10). The root עָטָה would be an Aramaizing form of Hebrew עָטָה (“to wander”). This emendation is suggested by the BHS editors and the lexicons (HALOT 377 s.v. 814 ;טעה; BDB 742 s.v.); It is adopted by many translations: “like one who wanders” (RSV, AV, JB, NAB, NJV), “like one who strays” (JPS, NJPS) and “as one that turneth aside” (KJV). This would make nice sense contextually: she begs her beloved to tell her where to find him because she does not want to wander around like someone who is lost

### 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** on the trail of the flock, and **pasture** your young goats by the tents of the shepherds.

KJV Song of Solomon 1:8 If thou know not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents.

NKJ Song of Solomon 1:8 THE BELOVED If you do not know, O fairest among women, Follow in the footsteps of the flock, And feed your little goats Beside the shepherds' tents.

NET Song of Solomon 1:8 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.

BGT Song of Solomon 1:8 ν μ γν ς σεαυτ ν καλ ν γυναιξ ν ξελθε σ ν πτ ρναις τ ν ποιμν ων κα πο μαινε τ ς ρ φους σου π σκην μασιν τ ν ποιμ νων



LXE Song of Solomon 1:8 If thou know not thyself, thou fair one among women, go thou forth by the footsteps of the flocks, and feed thy kids by the shepherd's tents.

CSB Song of Solomon 1:8 If you do not know, most beautiful of women, follow the tracks of the flock, and pasture your young goats near the shepherds' tents.

ESV Song of Solomon 1:8 If you do not know, O most beautiful among women, follow in the tracks of the flock, and pasture your young goats beside the shepherds' tents.

NIV Song of Solomon 1:8 If you do not know, most beautiful of women, follow the tracks of the sheep and graze your young goats by the tents of the shepherds.

NLT Song of Solomon 1:8 If you don't know, O most beautiful woman, follow the trail of my flock, and graze your young goats by the shepherds' tents.

YLT Song of Solomon 1:8 If thou knowest not, O fair among women, Get thee forth by the traces of the flock, And feed thy kids by the shepherds' dwellings!

NJB Song of Solomon 1:8 CHORUS: If you do not know this, O loveliest of women, follow the tracks of the flock, and take your kids to graze close by the shepherds' tents.

NRS Song of Solomon 1:8 If you do not know, O fairest among women, follow the tracks of the flock, and pasture your kids beside the shepherds' tents.

RSV Song of Solomon 1:8 If you do not know, O fairest among women, follow in the tracks of the flock, and pasture your kids beside the shepherds' tents.

NAB Song of Solomon 1:8 G If you do not know, O most beautiful among women, Follow the tracks of the flock and pasture the young ones near the shepherds' camps.

GWN Song of Solomon 1:8 If you do not know, most beautiful of women, follow the tracks of the flocks, and graze your young goats near the shepherds' tents.

**Bob Utley** - **If you yourself do not know** - This seems to be playful sarcasm. It refers to the chorus (NJB) or the bridegroom (NKJV) addressing the bride. This passage is one of many where the shepherd motif is used. This either refers to this Northern hometown boyfriend or it is a reference to King Solomon. This response answers her question of Sol 1:7. This verse has three IMPERATIVES.

**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." (See [Job, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs - Page 348](#))

**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).

### **Go forth on the trail of the flock, and pasture your young goats by the tents of the shepherds**

**Bob Utley** - "Go forth on the trail of the flock" This is interpreted in radically different ways depending on who is referred to in Sol 1:8. "tents" This (BDB 1015, KB 1496) is a different Hebrew word than the "tents" (BDB 438, KB 439), which could denote "curtains" or "tapestries" in Sol 1:5. This one denotes a temporary dwelling place (i.e., the tabernacle in the wilderness, i.e., Exod. 25:9). Verse 5 could refer to Solomon's travelling tents (large and elaborate) and this (v. 8) to a local shepherd's tent (i.e., Peshitta). It all depends on how many lovers are depicted in the book (one, the king, or two, the king and a local northern, shepherd boyfriend).

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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"**

KJV Song of Solomon 1:9 I have compared thee, O my love, to a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots.

NKJ Song of Solomon 1:9 I have compared you, my love, To my filly among Pharaoh's chariots.

NET Song of Solomon 1:9 O my beloved, you are like a mare among Pharaoh's stallions.

BGT Song of Solomon 1:9 τ ππ μου ν ρμασιν Φαρω μω ωσ σε πλησ ον μου

LXE Song of Solomon 1:9 I have likened thee, my companion, to my horses in the chariots of Pharaoh.

CSB Song of Solomon 1:9 I compare you, my darling, to a mare among Pharaoh's chariots.

ESV Song of Solomon 1:9 I compare you, my love, to a mare among Pharaoh's chariots.

NIV Song of Solomon 1:9 I liken you, my darling, to a mare harnessed to one of the chariots of Pharaoh.

NLT Song of Solomon 1:9 You are as exciting, my darling, as a mare among Pharaoh's stallions.

YLT Song of Solomon 1:9 To my joyous one in chariots of Pharaoh, I have compared thee, my friend,

NJB Song of Solomon 1:9 LOVER: I compare you, my love, to my mare harnessed to Pharaoh's chariot.

NRS Song of Solomon 1:9 I compare you, my love, to a mare among Pharaoh's chariots.

RSV Song of Solomon 1:9 I compare you, my love, to a mare of Pharaoh's chariots.

NAB Song of Solomon 1:9 G To the steeds of Pharaoh's chariots would I liken you, my beloved:

GWN Song of Solomon 1:9 My true love, I compare you to a mare among Pharaoh's stallions.

- my - Song 2:2,10,13 4:1,7 5:2 6:4

## AS BEAUTIFUL AS A MARE!

**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. Darling comes from the Hebrew phrase "to pasture" (cf. Sol 1:15) and means friend or companion. The root meaning of ra'yah is associate, companion or friend.

*Physical Attraction Builds*

*When We Affirm Character*

**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! ([Song of Solomon 1](#))

**You are like 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!

**Bob Utley** - **My mare among the chariots of Pharaoh**" Solomon was the first to import Arabian horses from Egypt (cf. 1 Kgs. 10:28; 2 Chr. 1:16,17; 9:28) for military purposes. This imagery refers either to (1) the ornamental beauty of the royal horses (possibly embroidered on the royal tent) or (2) the graceful movement and beauty of the animals themselves. These horses were prized animals!

**Bob Utley** - **"with ornaments"** This term (BDB 1064 I ) can refer to: (1) a type of hairdo or braid (BDB, Peshitta, TEV) (2) a necklace of precious metal (cf. Sol 1:11)

**Derek Thomas** - In verses 9-11, he's speaking to her, and he likens her—do you note—to a horse. Right. It's meant to be a compliment. You have to understand the context a little. He refers especially to an Egyptian horse and Egyptian horses, apparently, were the best that there were in the world, and this is a mare amongst stallions. In Egypt, chariots were usually pulled by stallions. And actually, it was done on more than one occasion, in order to defeat an enemy coming at you with horses—stallions and chariots—you would put a mare in amongst them and it would drive the stallions wild. Maybe that's what he means; that she drives him wild. You know, there's a physical, emotional, psychological response.

**Longman** on the simile 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. (See [Job, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs - Page 348](#))

**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** says calling her like my mare is "The height of flattery for Solomon, a lover of horses (1 Kings 4:26)." (Borrow [Ryrie Study Bible](#))

**Thomas 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) ([Expository Notes](#))

**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. (See [Job, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs - Page 348](#))

**Bob Utley - string of beads** The basic Akkadian root seems to mean "to encircle" or "go around again" (KB 1708). The reference could be to the horses' ornaments of Sol 1:9 or the woman's necklace of Sol 1:10, line 2. If the second line of Sol 1:10 is synonymous parallelism, "ornaments" refers to a "string of beads" (BDB 354, this term appears only here in the OT and a similar root means "string of beads" or "string of shells," or "string of pearls") or NKJV, "chains of gold" (to parallel Sol 1:11, line 1). Both of these words are rare and disputed. This ambiguity is characteristic of poetry!

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**NET Notes** NET = O my beloved, you are like<sup>46</sup> a<sup>47</sup> mare<sup>48</sup> among Pharaoh's stallions.<sup>49</sup>

46 tn Heb "I compare you to."

47 tn The hireq-yod ending on סֹסֵתִי (susati) is a remnant of the old genitive ending (e.g., nominative: malku, genitive: malki, accusative: malka), the so-called hireq compaginis ending. Thus, סֹסֵתִי בְרֶכְבִּי פָרְעֹה (susati berikve par'oh) is a double genitive-construct: "a mare among the chariot-horses of Pharaoh" (M. H. Pope, Song of Songs [AB], 338) or "a mare among the chariots of Pharaoh" (R. E. Murphy, Song of Songs [Hermeneia], 131). The hireq-yod ending was mistakenly treated as 1st person common singular possessive suffix "my mare" by LXX, Vulgate, Syriac. This approach is mistakenly adopted by several translations: "my mare" (NASB, NJB), "my filly" (NKJV) and "my company of horsemen" (DRA).

48 sn It was common in ancient love literature to compare a beautiful woman to a sleek filly. For example, Horace likened Lyde to a three year old filly: "She gambols over the spreading plains and shrinks from touch, to wedlock still a stranger, not yet ripe for eager mate" (Horace, Odes iii. xi. 9). Theocritus compared Helen of Troy to a graceful steed harnessed to a chariot: "As towers the cypress mid the garden's bloom, as in the chariot proud Thessalian steed, thus graceful rose-complexion'd Helen moves" (Theocritus, Idyll xviii. 30–31).

49 tn Heb "among the chariot-horses" or "among the chariots." The noun רֶכֶב (rekhev) has a wide range of meanings: "chariots, war-chariots" (Exod 14:17–18, 23; 15:19; Deut 11:4; 20:1; Josh 11:4) "chariot crews, chariot troops" (1 Kgs 9:22; 16:9; 22:31; 2 Kg 8:21), "column of chariots, troop of warriors" (Isa 21:7, 9), "charioteer" (Ps 76:7), and "chariot-horses" (Exod 14:9; 2 Sam 8:4; 1 Chr 18:4; Ezek 39:20) (HALOT 1233–35 s.v. רֶכֶב). Scholars have struggled with the meaning of בְּרֶכְבִּי פָרְעֹה (bérikhbe par'oh, "[harnessed to (?)] Pharaoh's chariot"; HALOT 1234 s.v. 6.b). M. H. Pope (Song of Songs [AB], 338) suggests that רֶכֶבִּי (rikhbe) be nuanced "chariot-horses" and the phrase rendered "among the chariot-horses of Pharaoh." Pope offers the best explanation of this enigmatic picture: "A crucial consideration overlooked by commentators is the well-attested fact that Pharaoh's chariots, like other chariotry in antiquity, were not drawn by a mare or mares but by stallions hitched in pairs. This bit of intelligence radically alters the usual understanding of the verse and dispels the notion that there is a grammatical incongruity, which needs harmonizing. The juxtaposition is between a single mare and a plurality of

stallions and it requires only a modicum of what is called 'horse sense' to appreciate the thrust of the comparison. The situation envisaged is illustrated by the famous incident in one of the campaigns of Thutmose III against Qadesh. On his tomb at Thebes, the Egyptian soldier Amenemheb relates how the Prince of Qadesh sent forth a swift mare, which entered among the army. But Amenemheb ran after her on foot and with his dagger ripped open her belly, cut off her tail, and presented it to the king, thus preventing a debacle before the excited stallions could take out after the mare."

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

Song 1:10 "Your cheeks are lovely with ornaments, your neck with strings of beads."

KJV Song of Solomon 1:10 Thy cheeks are comely with rows of jewels, thy neck with chains of gold.

NKJ Song of Solomon 1:10 Your cheeks are lovely with ornaments, Your neck with chains of gold.

NET Song of Solomon 1:10 Your cheeks are beautiful with ornaments; your neck is lovely with strings of jewels.

BGT Song of Solomon 1:10 τ ραι θησαν σιαγ νες σου ς τρυγ νες τρ χηλ ς σου ς ρμ σκoi

LXE Song of Solomon 1:10 How are thy cheeks beautiful as those of a dove, thy neck as chains!

CSB Song of Solomon 1:10 Your cheeks are beautiful with jewelry, your neck with its necklace.

ESV Song of Solomon 1:10 Your cheeks are lovely with ornaments, your neck with strings of jewels.

NIV Song of Solomon 1:10 Your cheeks are beautiful with earrings, your neck with strings of jewels.

NLT Song of Solomon 1:10 How lovely are your cheeks; your earrings set them afire! How lovely is your neck, enhanced by a string of jewels.

YLT Song of Solomon 1:10 Comely have been thy cheeks with garlands, Thy neck with chains.

NJB Song of Solomon 1:10 Your cheeks show fair between their pendants and your neck within its necklaces.

NRS Song of Solomon 1:10 Your cheeks are comely with ornaments, your neck with strings of jewels.

RSV Song of Solomon 1:10 Your cheeks are comely with ornaments, your neck with strings of jewels.

NAB Song of Solomon 1:10 Your cheeks lovely in pendants, your neck in jewels.

GWN Song of Solomon 1:10 Your cheeks are lovely with ornaments, your neck with strings of pearls.

#### ■ Neck - Song 4:9

**G Lloyd Carr** on **your neck with strings of beads** says "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." (Borrow [Solomon Commentary](#))

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**NET Notes** NET = Your cheeks are beautiful with ornaments; your neck is lovely<sup>50</sup> with strings of jewels.

50 tn The phrase "is lovely" does not appear in the Hebrew but is supplied in the translation for the sake of clarity to complete the parallelism with the preceding line.

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

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

KJV Song of Solomon 1:11 We will make thee borders of gold with studs of silver.

NKJ Song of Solomon 1:11 THE DAUGHTERS OF JERUSALEM We will make you ornaments of gold With studs of silver.

NET Song of Solomon 1:11 We will make for you gold ornaments studded with silver.

BGT Song of Solomon 1:11 μοι ματᾶ χρυσοῦ ποίσομι ν σοι μετ' στιγμῶν τοῦ ῥυγυροῦ

LXE Song of Solomon 1:11 We will make thee figures of gold with studs of silver.

CSB Song of Solomon 1:11 We will make gold jewelry for you, accented with silver.

ESV Song of Solomon 1:11 We will make for you ornaments of gold, studded with silver.

NIV Song of Solomon 1:11 We will make you earrings of gold, studded with silver.

NLT Song of Solomon 1:11 We will make for you earrings of gold and beads of silver. Young Woman

YLT Song of Solomon 1:11 Garlands of gold we do make for thee, With studs of silver!

NJB Song of Solomon 1:11 We shall make you golden earrings and beads of silver.

NRS Song of Solomon 1:11 We will make you ornaments of gold, studded with silver.

RSV Song of Solomon 1:11 We will make you ornaments of gold, studded with silver.

NAB Song of Solomon 1:11 We will make pendants of gold for you, and silver ornaments.

GWN Song of Solomon 1:11 We will make gold ornaments with silver beads for you.

#### ■ Song 8:9

**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. ([Song of Solomon 1](#))

**G Lloyd 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. (Borrow [Solomon Commentary](#))

**Bob Utley** - Again the problem is the identity of the speaker. Note the use of the PLURAL “we.”

1. The NKJV identifies the speaker as “the Daughters of Jerusalem.”
2. The NASB makes Sol 1:11 a separate paragraph, denoting a possible change of speaker. However, its outline makes Sol 1:8-17 come from Solomon.
3. TEV and NJB see it as a continuation of the male speaker.

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**NET Notes** NET = We51 will make for you gold ornaments studded with silver.52

51 tn The subject of the 1st person common plural verb נִשְׂאֵה (na’aseh) might be the maidens of Jerusalem mentioned in 1:4[5]. However, this might be an example of heterosis of number, that is, the 1st person common plural for 1st person common singular person. In this case, her lover—the speaker throughout the rest of 1:8–9[9–10]—would still be the speaker here. Other possible examples of heterosis of number of the plural for the singular in the Song include 1:3[4]; 2:15; 5:1b; 6:13[7:1].

52 tn Or “We will make gold ornaments with your studs of silver.”

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

**Song 1:12 "While the king was at his table, my perfume (KJV = spikenard) gave forth its fragrance.**

KJV Song of Solomon 1:12 While the king sitteth at his table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof.

NKJ Song of Solomon 1:12 THE SHULAMITE While the king is at his table, My spikenard sends forth its fragrance.

NET Song of Solomon 1:12 While the king was at his banqueting table, my nard gave forth its fragrance.

BGT Song of Solomon 1:12 ὡς ὁ βασιλεὺς ἐν νακλῶν αὐτοῦ ῥῶδος μου δῶκεν σμῆνα τοῦ

LXE Song of Solomon 1:12 So long as the king was at table, my spikenard gave forth its smell.  
 CSB Song of Solomon 1:12 While the king is on his couch, my perfume releases its fragrance.  
 ESV Song of Solomon 1:12 While the king was on his couch, my nard gave forth its fragrance.  
 NIV Song of Solomon 1:12 While the king was at his table, my perfume spread its fragrance.  
 NLT Song of Solomon 1:12 The king is lying on his couch, enchanted by the fragrance of my perfume.  
 YLT Song of Solomon 1:12 While the king is in his circle, My spikenard hath given its fragrance.  
 NJB Song of Solomon 1:12 DUO: -While the king rests in his own room my nard yields its perfume.  
 NRS Song of Solomon 1:12 While the king was on his couch, my nard gave forth its fragrance.  
 RSV Song of Solomon 1:12 While the king was on his couch, my nard gave forth its fragrance.  
 NAB Song of Solomon 1:12 B For the king's banquet my nard gives forth its fragrance.  
 GWN Song of Solomon 1:12 While the king is at his table, my perfume fills the air with its fragrance.

Spikenard ([source](#))

## INTIMATE FRAGRANCES

**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. (Borrow [Solomon Commentary](#))

**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").

**Bob Utley** - While the king was at his table" Again, the interpretation depends on, "who is the king?" The term (BDB 687) translated by NASB and NKJV as "table" can also mean "couch" (cf. NRSV, JPSOA, TEV, REB) "room" (NJB) Its basic meaning is "that which surrounds." It could surely be the elaborate sleeping tent and couch of Solomon or a simple bed mat of a shepherd expressed in hyperbole.

**Table** ([04524 - תיבון](#)) (**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**) - 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. (The Preacher's Outline and Sermon Bible – Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon)

**Bob Utley** - "perfume" This (BDB 669, KB 723, cf. Sol 4:13,14) was an oily extract from a sweet smelling plant from the Himalayas region of India (Sanskrit root). It was used as an aromatic aphrodisiac in the Ancient Near East.

**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. (See [Job, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs - Page 348](#))

**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! ([Song of Solomon 1](#))

**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. (The Preacher's Outline and Sermon Bible – Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon)

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**NET Notes** NET = While the king was at his banqueting table,<sup>53</sup> my nard<sup>54</sup> gave forth its fragrance.<sup>55</sup>

53 tn The lexicons suggest that מִסָּב (mesav) refers to a round banquet table (HALOT 604 s.v. מִסָּב) or divan with cushions (BDB 687 s.v. 2 מִסָּב). In Mishnaic Hebrew the noun מִסָּב refers to a dining couch, banquet table, as well as cushions or pillows (HALOT 604). The related noun מְסִבָּה (mésibbah) refers to a banqueting party (HALOT 604 s.v. מְסִבָּה; Jastrow 803 s.v. מְסִבָּה). The versions took it as a reference to a resting place (see LXX, Vulgate, Syriac Peshitta). R. E. Murphy (Song of Songs [Hermeneia], 131) suggests that it refers to (1) a couch or divan on which a person reclined while eating, (2) a group of people gathered in a circle, that is, an entourage, or (3) a private place such as an enclosure.

tc The MT בְּמִסָּבוֹ (bimsibbo, "his banquet table") is enigmatic: "While the king was at his banquet table, my nard gave forth its fragrance." W. Rudolph suggests emending to מְסִבִּי (mésibbi, "around me"): "While the king surrounded me, my nard gave forth its fragrance" (Des Buch Ruth, das Hohe Lied, die Klagelieder [KAT], 27).

54 sn "Nard" (נֶרְדֵּי, nerdé) was an aromatic oil extracted from the Valerian nardostachys jatamansi which was an aromatic drug from a plant which grew in the Himalaya region of India, used for perfume (HALOT 723 s.v. נֶרְדֵּי). Nard was an expensive imported perfume, worn by women at banquets because of its seductive charms. It was used in the ANE as a love potion because of its erotic fragrance (Borrow R. K. Harrison, [Healing Herbs of the Bible, 48–49](#)).

55 tn Or "The fragrance of my myrrh wafted forth."

### 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.

KJV Song of Solomon 1:13 A bundle of myrrh is my wellbeloved unto me; he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts.

NKJ Song of Solomon 1:13 A bundle of myrrh is my beloved to me, That lies all night between my breasts.

NET Song of Solomon 1:13 My beloved is like a fragrant pouch of myrrh spending the night between my breasts.

BGT Song of Solomon 1:13 π δεσμος τ ς στακτ ς δελφιδ ς μου μο ν μ σον τ ν μαστ ν μου α λισθ σεται

LXE Song of Solomon 1:13 My kinsman is to me a bundle of myrrh; he shall lie between my breasts.

CSB Song of Solomon 1:13 My love is a sachet of myrrh to me, spending the night between my breasts.

ESV Song of Solomon 1:13 My beloved is to me a sachet of myrrh that lies between my breasts.

NIV Song of Solomon 1:13 My lover is to me a sachet of myrrh resting between my breasts.

NLT Song of Solomon 1:13 My lover is like a sachet of myrrh lying between my breasts.

YLT Song of Solomon 1:13 A bundle of myrrh is my beloved to me, Between my breasts it lodgeth.

NJB Song of Solomon 1:13 My love is a sachet of myrrh lying between my breasts.

NRS Song of Solomon 1:13 My beloved is to me a bag of myrrh that lies between my breasts.

RSV Song of Solomon 1:13 My beloved is to me a bag of myrrh, that lies between my breasts.

NAB Song of Solomon 1:13 My lover is for me a sachet of myrrh to rest in my bosom.

GWN Song of Solomon 1:13 My beloved is a pouch of myrrh that lies at night between my breasts.

BBE Song of Solomon 1:13 As a bag of myrrh is my well-loved one to me, when he is at rest all night 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).

**J. Stafford Wright** 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**." (See [The Expositor's Bible Commentary - Abridged Edition](#))

**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 Shulammitte was declaring that he was the beautiful, pleasing fragrance of her life, and that she carried him constantly close to her heart.

**Bob Utley** - This refers to the ancient method of perfuming. In symbolism it refers to one of the lovers dreaming/thinking of the other all night!

**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. (Borrow [Solomon Commentary](#))

While I love **C H Spurgeon** and quote him more than anyone on this website, I have to take issue with his comment on this verse where he allegorizes or spiritualizes **myrrh** writing that "Myrrh may well be chosen as the type of Jesus on account of its preciousness, its perfume, its pleasantness, its healing, preserving, disinfecting qualities, and its connection with sacrifice." Everything he says about Jesus is true - precious, sweet, pleasant, etc, but that is not literally what this verse is speaking about. Does Jesus lie "all night between my breasts" like Solomon describes for myrrh?

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

**Bob Utley** - "breast" This term (BDB 994) is used several times in the book (Sol 1:13; 4:5; 7:3,7-8; 8:8,10). This same phrase, "between breasts," is used by Hosea to denote pagan fertility worship (cf. Hosea 2:2). This shows how this same imagery has different connotations in different contexts.

**J. Stafford Wright** 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. (See [The Expositor's Bible Commentary - Abridged Edition- Page 262](#))

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.

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**NET Notes** NET = My beloved is like a fragrant pouch of myrrh<sup>56</sup> spending the night<sup>57</sup> between my breasts.

56 תּוֹר The term מֹר (mor, "myrrh") refers to an aromatic gum (Commiphora abessinica resin) which exudes from the bark of the Balsmodendron myrrha tree which was native only to Arabia, Abyssinia, and India (HALOT 629 s.v. מֹר). It was an expensive luxury item, which had to be imported into Israel. In liquid form it could be carried in small bottles like nard, but it was also used in solid form in which it was carried in a small cloth pouch or sachet worn next to the body. The myrrh was mixed with fat and shaped into cones and as the fat melted from the body heat, the aroma of myrrh and the anointing oil would perfume a woman's body. Because it had a very strong aroma which would last for long periods of time, women often wore it to bed to perfume themselves for the next day. Because of its beautiful fragrance, it is associated with romance (e.g., Isa 3:24) (R. K. Harrison, *Healing Herbs of the Bible*, 45–46).

57 תּוֹר Alternately, "resting between my breasts." The verb לִין (lin) has a three-fold range of meaning in the Qal stem: (1) "to leave overnight," e.g., meat or corpse on a tree, (2) "to spend the night, stay overnight," and (3) "to stay, dwell" (HALOT 529 s.v. לִין). The myrrh motif (see study note above) suggests the nuance "to spend the night" (HALOT 529 s.v. 2). This is also the most appropriate nuance of its usage in Song 7:12 (e.g., Gen 19:2; 24:23, 25, 54; 28:11; 31:54; 32:14, 22; Num 22:8; Josh 3:1; 4:3; 6:11; 8:9; Judg 18:2; 19:4–15 (9x), 20; 20:4; 2 Sam 12:16; 17:8, 16; 19:8; 1 Kgs 19:9; Isa 21:13; 65:4; Jer 14:8; Joel 1:13; Zeph 2:14; Pss 25:13; 55:8; Job 24:7; 31:32; 39:9; Prov 19:23; Song 7:12; Ruth 1:16; 3:13; Neh 4:16; 13:20; 1 Chr 9:27). Several translations follow course: "he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts" (KJV) and "which lies all night between my breasts" (NASB). Others downplay the obvious sexual connotations: "resting between my breasts" (NIV) and "lodged between my breasts" (NJPS). The imperfect has been taken in two basic senses: (1) future time action: "he shall spend the night between my breasts" and (2) present characteristic or present progressive: "he spends the night between my breasts." The latter is favored by the characteristic/progressive nature of the metaphors used through 1:12–13[13–14].

## Shulammite (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](#)

KJV Song of Solomon 1:14 My beloved is unto me as a cluster of camphire in the vineyards of Engedi.

NKJ Song of Solomon 1:14 My beloved is to me a cluster of henna blooms In the vineyards of En Gedi.

NET Song of Solomon 1:14 My beloved is like a cluster of henna blossoms in the vineyards of En-Gedi.

BGT Song of Solomon 1:14 β τρυς τ ς κ πρου δελφιδ ς μου μο ν μπελ σιν Εγγαδδι

LXE Song of Solomon 1:14 My kinsman is to me a cluster of camphor in the vineyards of Engaddi.

CSB Song of Solomon 1:14 My love is a cluster of henna blossoms to me, in the vineyards of En-gedi.

ESV Song of Solomon 1:14 My beloved is to me a cluster of henna blossoms in the vineyards of Engedi.

NIV Song of Solomon 1:14 My lover is to me a cluster of henna blossoms from the vineyards of En Gedi.

NLT Song of Solomon 1:14 He is like a bouquet of sweet henna blossoms from the vineyards of En-gedi.  
Young Man

YLT Song of Solomon 1:14 A cluster of cypress is my beloved to me, In the vineyards of En-Gedi!

NJB Song of Solomon 1:14 My love is a cluster of henna flowers among the vines of En-Gedi.

NRS Song of Solomon 1:14 My beloved is to me a cluster of henna blossoms in the vineyards of En-gedi.

RSV Song of Solomon 1:14 My beloved is to me a cluster of henna blossoms in the vineyards of Engedi.

NAB Song of Solomon 1:14 My lover is for me a cluster of henna from the vineyards of Engedi.

GWN Song of Solomon 1:14 My beloved is a bouquet of henna flowers in the vineyards of En Gedi.

BBE Song of Solomon 1:14 My love is to me as a branch of the cypress-tree in the vine-gardens of En-gedi.

The Shulammite'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 Shulammite'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 Borrow [Solomon Commentary](#))

[Bob Utley](#) - "**a cluster of henna blossoms**" These are small fragrant white flowers (BDB 499) that come from a bush that grow abundantly in the Middle East. They are still used by Arab women today who use these flowers to dye parts of their bodies either orange or yellow. See UBS *Fauna and Flora of the Bible*, pp. 127-128.

**HCSB** - While Solomon was away and about his realm, Shulammite'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. ([Song of Solomon 1](#))

**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. (The Preacher's Outline and Sermon Bible – Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon)

**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. (See [Job, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs - Page 348](#))

**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. (Borrow [Solomon Commentary](#))

**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](#)) (The Preacher's Outline and Sermon Bible – Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon)

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**NET Notes** NET = My beloved is like a cluster of henna blossoms<sup>58</sup> in the vineyards of En-Gedi.<sup>59</sup>

58 sn The henna plant (כֹּפֶר, kofer, "henna"; HALOT 495 s.v. III כֹּפֶר) is an inflorescent shrub with upward pointing blossoms, that have sweet smelling whitish flowers that grow in thick clusters (Song 4:13; 7:12). Like myrrh, the henna plant was used to make sweet smelling perfume. Its flowers were used to dye hair, nails, fingers, and toes orange.

59 sn En-Gedi is a lush oasis in the midst of the desert wilderness on the southwestern shore of the Dead Sea. The surrounding region is hot and bleak; its dry sands extend monotonously for miles. The Dead Sea region is a salty desert covered with a dusty haze and characterized by almost unbearable heat during most of the year. The lush oasis of En-Gedi is the only sign of greenery or life for miles around. It stands out as a surprising contrast to the bleak, dry desert wilderness around it. In the midst of this bleak desert wilderness is the lush oasis in which indescribable beauty is found. The lush oasis and waterfall brings welcome relief and refreshment to the weary desert traveler.

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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."**

KJV Song of Solomon 1:15 Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thou hast doves' eyes.

NKJ Song of Solomon 1:15 THE BELOVED Behold, you are fair, my love! Behold, you are fair! You have dove's eyes.

NET Song of Solomon 1:15 Oh, how beautiful you are, my beloved! Oh, how beautiful you are! Your eyes are like doves!

BGT Song of Solomon 1:15 ὁ ε καλ πλῆσ ον μου ὁ ε καλ φθαλμο σου περιστερα

LXE Song of Solomon 1:15 Behold, thou art fair, my companion; behold, thou art fair; thine eyes are doves.

CSB Song of Solomon 1:15 How beautiful you are, my darling. How very beautiful! Your eyes are doves.



ESV Song of Solomon 1:15 Behold, you are beautiful, my love; behold, you are beautiful; your eyes are doves.

NIV Song of Solomon 1:15 How beautiful you are, my darling! Oh, how beautiful! Your eyes are doves.

NLT Song of Solomon 1:15 How beautiful you are, my darling, how beautiful! Your eyes are like doves. Young Woman

YLT Song of Solomon 1:15 Lo, thou art fair, my friend, Lo, thou art fair, thine eyes are doves!

NJB Song of Solomon 1:15 -How beautiful you are, my beloved, how beautiful you are! Your eyes are doves.

NRS Song of Solomon 1:15 Ah, you are beautiful, my love; ah, you are beautiful; your eyes are doves.

RSV Song of Solomon 1:15 Behold, you are beautiful, my love; behold, you are beautiful; your eyes are doves.

NAB Song of Solomon 1:15 G Ah, you are beautiful, my beloved, ah, you are beautiful; your eyes are doves!

GWN Song of Solomon 1:15 Look at you! You are beautiful, my true love! Look at you! You are so beautiful! Your eyes are like doves!

BBE Song of Solomon 1:15 See, you are fair, my love, you are fair; you have the eyes of a dove.

## MUTUAL ADMIRATION

**Behold** ([hinneh](#); Lxx - [idou](#)) - The **ESV** correctly translates this "**Behold**, you are beautiful," but unfortunately the NASB omits this important interjection (which is a relatively common omission in the NASB for reasons which I cannot understand).

**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." (Borrow [Solomon Commentary](#))

**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." (Borrow [Solomon Commentary](#))

**Bob Utley** - "**How beautiful you are**" This phrase is repeated for emphasis. This term (BDB 421) is used often:

1. in the phrase, "most beautiful of women," Sol 1:8; 5:9; 6:1
2. in the phrase, "How beautiful you are," Sol 1:15(twice); 4:1(twice),7; 6:4
3. in the phrase, "beautiful one," Sol 2:10,13
4. in the term, "handsome," Sol 1:16 (used only here in the OT to describe the man)
5. in Sol 6:10 it describes the moon

**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!" (The Preacher's Outline and Sermon Bible – Ecclesiastes, 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).

**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. (The Preacher's Outline and Sermon Bible – Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon)

**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](#))

**Bob Utley - Your eyes are like doves**" The allusion here is possibly to

1. mate loyalty
2. gentleness
3. a sweet melodious song
4. a symbol of peace, love or innocence
5. color

This phrase is used again in Sol 4:1 and 5:12. See full note at Sol 2:14. It is repeated by the woman in Sol 1:16.

"Dove" (BDB 401 I) is used several times in comparisons (cf. Sol 1:15; 2:14; 4:1; 5:2,12; 6:9). It is a bird of peace and beauty. See UBS *Fauna and Flora of the Bible*, pp. 23-24.

**Carr** surmises that "most probably the comparison is to the deep, smoke-grey colour with flashes of iridescence." (Borrow [Solomon Commentary](#))

**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." (See [Job, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs - Page 348](#))

**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)! ([Song of Solomon 1](#))

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**NET Notes** NET = Oh,60 how beautiful you are, my beloved!61 Oh, how beautiful you are! Your eyes62 are like doves!63

60 sn His praise begins with the exclamatory particle הִנֵּה (hinneh, "behold!"). This is often used to introduce a statement in which the speaker either newly asserts or newly recognizes something (BDB 244 s.v. הִנֵּה b.a).

61 sn The term רַעֲיָתִי (ra'yati, "my darling") is from רַעַ (re'a) "companion, friend" in general (e.g., Job 2:11; 6:27; 12:4; Pss 35:14; 122:8; Prov 14:20; 17:17; 19:6; 27:10) and "darling, beloved" in romantic relationships (e.g., Job 30:29; Jer 3:1, 20; Hos 3:1; Song 5:1, 16) (HALOT 1253–54 s.v. רַעַ; BDB 945 s.v. רַעַה II.1). This is the most common term of affection to address the Beloved (Song 1:9, 15; 2:2, 10, 13; 4:1, 7; 5:2; 6:4).

62 sn In the ancient Near East there was an unusual emphasis on beauty of a woman's eyes. This was probably due to the practice of women veiling themselves and wearing long robes so that no portion of their body or face was exposed to sight except for their eyes (e.g., Gen 26:17). The only indication of a woman's beauty was her eyes. There was no better (and no other, in light of the attire) way to praise a woman's beauty in the ancient Near East (G. L. Carr, Song of Solomon [TOTC], 86).

63 tn Heb "Your eyes are doves." This metaphor compares her eyes to doves. There is no lack of suggestions as to the point of the comparison: (1) Arabic love literature describes doves having sentimental eyes, the point here (Marcia Falk, Love Lyrics from the Bible, 113). (2) The comparison has to do with the color of her eyes (G. L. Carr, Song of Solomon [TOTC], 86). (3) The comparison has to do with the glistening color of the dove and its quick movements, that is, her eyes had a beautiful color and had lively motion (M. H. Pope, Song of Songs [AB], 356). (4) The comparison has to do with the fluttering of her eyes which reminded him of the fluttering of a dove's wings (M. D. Goulder, The Song of Fourteen Songs [JSOTSup], 5). (5) The comparison has to do with gentleness and purity, as well as longing and simplicity (K&D 18:38).

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**Behold** (02009) [hinneh](#) is an interjection meaning behold, look, now; if. "It is used often and expresses strong feelings, surprise, hope, expectation, certainty, thus giving vividness depending on its surrounding context." (Baker) **Hinneh** generally directs our mind to the text, imploring the reader to give it special attention. In short, the Spirit is trying to arrest our attention! And so **hinneh** is used as an exclamation of vivid immediacy (e.g., read [Ge 6:13](#))! **Hinneh** is a marker used to enliven a narrative, to express a change a scene, to emphasize an idea, to call attention to a detail or an important fact or action that follows ([Isa 65:17](#), [Ge 17:20](#), [41:17](#)). The first use of **hinneh** in [Ge 1:29](#) and second in [Ge 1:31](#) - "And God saw all that He had made, and **behold**, it was very good.

**Spurgeon** reminds us that "**Behold** is a word of wonder; it is intended to excite admiration. Wherever you see it hung out in Scripture, it is like an ancient sign-board, signifying that there are rich wares within, or like the hands which solid readers have observed in the margin of the older Puritanic books, drawing attention to something particularly worthy of observation." I would add, **behold** is like a divine highlighter, a divine underlining of an especially striking or important text. It says in effect "Listen up, all ye who would be wise in the ways of Jehovah!"

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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

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

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

KJV Song of Solomon 1:16 Behold, thou art fair, my beloved, yea, pleasant: also our bed is green.

NKJ Song of Solomon 1:16 THE SHULAMITE Behold, you are handsome, my beloved! Yes, pleasant! Also our bed is green.

NET Song of Solomon 1:16 Oh, how handsome you are, my lover! Oh, how delightful you are! The lush foliage is our canopied bed;

BGT Song of Solomon 1:16 ὁ εὐκαλὺς δελφιδὲς μου καγεραὸς πρὸς κλινὴ μυσκίος

LXE Song of Solomon 1:16 Behold, thou art fair, my kinsman, yea, beautiful, overshadowing our bed.

CSB Song of Solomon 1:16 How handsome you are, my love. How delightful! Our bed is lush with foliage;

ESV Song of Solomon 1:16 Behold, you are beautiful, my beloved, truly delightful. Our couch is green;

NIV Song of Solomon 1:16 How handsome you are, my lover! Oh, how charming! And our bed is verdant.

NLT Song of Solomon 1:16 You are so handsome, my love, pleasing beyond words! The soft grass is our bed;

YLT Song of Solomon 1:16 Lo, thou art fair, my love, yea, pleasant, Yea, our couch is green,

NJB Song of Solomon 1:16 -How beautiful you are, my love, and how you delight me! Our bed is the greensward.

NRS Song of Solomon 1:16 Ah, you are beautiful, my beloved, truly lovely. Our couch is green;

RSV Song of Solomon 1:16 Behold, you are beautiful, my beloved, truly lovely. Our couch is green;

NAB Song of Solomon 1:16 B Ah, you are beautiful, my lover-- yes, you are lovely. Our couch, too, is verdant;

GWN Song of Solomon 1:16 Look at you! You are handsome, my beloved, so pleasing to me! The leaf-scattered ground will be our couch.

BBE Song of Solomon 1:16 See, you are fair, my loved one, and a pleasure; our bed is green.

**How handsome your are** - Once again the NASB fails to translate the important interjection "**Behold**" ([hinneh](#)). ESV has "Behold, you are beautiful." 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 Shulamite.

**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.

**Bob Utley** - This refers to either the grandeur of the royal travelling pavilion or the secret meeting place in the woods of the two hometown lovers

**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 [yapeh](#) 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?'

**Yapheh** 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** (yapheh) 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 Shulamite (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. (The Preacher's Outline and Sermon Bible – Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon)

**Couch** (06210 - שֹׁכָב) (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." (Borrow [Solomon Commentary](#))

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**NET Notes** NET = Oh, how handsome you are, my lover!64 Oh,65 how delightful66 you are! The lush foliage67 is our canopied bed;68

64 sn The statement יָפָה הַנָּךְ רַעֲיָתִי (hinnakh yafah ra'yati, "How beautiful you are, my darling") in 1:15 is virtually mirrored by the Beloved's statement in 1:16, יָפָה דּוֹדִי (hinnékh yafeh dodí, "How handsome you are, my lover").

65 tn The term הַאֲ (ʾaf, "how") is used to: (1) introduce additional information; (2) to emphasize a point; (3) to enhance a statement; (4) to create an antithesis (HALOT 76 s.v. הַאֲ). The usage here is to enhance "how pleasant" or "certainly pleasant" (HALOT 76). The particle הַאֲ is often used in Hebrew poetry to emphatically introduce a thought in the second colon which is a step beyond what was asserted in the first colon (e.g., Deut 33:3, 20, 28; 1 Sam 2:7; Pss 16:6, 7, 9; 18:49; 65:14; 68:9, 17; 74:16; 89:28; 93:1; Prov 22:19; 23:28) (BDB 64 s.v. b.1). Sometimes, הַאֲ is used to introduce a surprise or something unexpected (e.g., Job 14:3; 15:4) (BDB 65 s.v. a.1). The particle הַאֲ ("Oh!"), which introduces this line, is often used in Hebrew poetry to emphatically introduce a new thought and indicates that this is an addition to the previous statement; it is something far greater.

66 tn The term נְעִים (na'im, "pleasant, delightful") can refer to physical attractiveness or to personal character (BDB 653 נְעִים; HALOT 705 s.v. נְעִים). Some suggest that it refers to the pleasantness of his character and personality; however, it is better to take this as a reference to his handsome physical appearance for several reasons: (1) The terms יָפָה (yafeh, "handsome") and נְעִים ("delightful") are probably used in synonymous rather than synthetic parallelism. (2) The emphasis in 1:15–16 is on physical beauty as the repetition of the term "beautiful, handsome" (יָפָה) suggests. (3) The related verb נְעַמְתֵּךְ (na'amté, "to be delightful") is used in Song 7:7 in synonymous parallelism with יָפָה (yafat, "to be beautiful") in the description of the Beloved's physical beauty. (4) Hebrew lexicographers classify this usage of נְעִים in Song 1:16 in terms of physical beauty rather than personal character (BDB 653 s.v. 2).

67 tn The term רֶעֶנָה (ra'anah, "lush, verdant") refers to the color "green" and is often used in reference to luxuriant foliage or trees (Pss 37:35; 52:8; Jer 11:16; Hos 14:8). The impression 1:16c–17 gives is that the young man and young woman are lying down together on the grass in the woods enjoying the delights of their caresses. They liken the grass below and the green leaves above to a marriage couch or canopied bed.

68 tn Or "The lush foliage is our marriage couch." The term עֶרֶשׁ ('eres, "bed") describes a canopied bed (Pss 6:7; 41:4; 132:2; Prov 7:16) or marriage couch (Song 1:16) (BDB 793 s.v. עֶרֶשׁ).

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

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

KJV Song of Solomon 1:17 The beams of our house are cedar, and our rafters of fir.

NKJ Song of Solomon 1:17 The beams of our houses are cedar, And our rafters of fir.

NET Song of Solomon 1:17 the cedars are the beams of our bedroom chamber; the pines are the rafters of our bedroom.

BGT Song of Solomon 1:17 ὄκο ο κων μ ν κ ὄροι φατν ματα μ ν κυπ ρισσοι

LXE Song of Solomon 1:17 The beams of our house are cedars, our ceilings are of cypress.

CSB Song of Solomon 1:17 the beams of our house are cedars, and our rafters are cypresses.

ESV Song of Solomon 1:17 the beams of our house are cedar; our rafters are pine.

NIV Song of Solomon 1:17 The beams of our house are cedars; our rafters are firs.

NLT Song of Solomon 1:17 fragrant cedar branches are the beams of our house, and pleasant smelling firs are the rafters. Young Woman

YLT Song of Solomon 1:17 The beams of our houses are cedars, Our rafters are firs, I am a rose of Sharon, a lily of the valleys!

NJB Song of Solomon 1:17 -The beams of our house are cedar trees, its panelling the cypress.

NRS Song of Solomon 1:17 the beams of our house are cedar, our rafters are pine.

RSV Song of Solomon 1:17 the beams of our house are cedar, our rafters are pine.

NAB Song of Solomon 1:17 the beams of our house are cedars, our rafters, cypresses.

GWN Song of Solomon 1:17 The cedars will be the walls of our house. The cypress trees will be our rafters.

BBE Song of Solomon 1:17 Cedar-trees are the pillars of our house; and our boards are made of fir-trees.

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

**Bob Utley** - The UBS' Helps for Translators, *Fauna and Flora of the Bible*, says, "there is great confusion in all versions, ancient and modern, over the identity of evergreens in the Bible" (p. 116).

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

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**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)**

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