

Supplemental Notes:

Song of Songs

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Song of Songs

(Also called, *Canticles* - from the Latin)

Introduction

Here is a book with only 117 verses and 470 Hebrew words (47 of which appear only in this book), yet it is among the least studied and most emotionally controversial.

It is perhaps the most difficult and mysterious book in the entire Bible. A cursory glance at the Song's history of interpretation reveals a diversity of opinion unequalled in the study of any other Biblical work. The Song has been interpreted as:

- (a) an allegory,
- (b) an extended type,
- (c) a drama involving either two or three main characters,
- (d) a collection of Syrian wedding songs (a view held by E. Renan, J. Wetzstein, Umberto Cassuto, and others) in which the groom played the role of a king and the bride played the role of a queen,
- (e) a collection of pagan fertility cult liturgies (held by Theophile Meek), and
- (f) an anthology of disconnected songs extolling human love (held by Robert Gordis).

Historical Notes

Jewish tradition (the Mishnah, the Talmud, and the Targum) viewed the book as an allegorical picture of the love of God for Israel. Church leaders, including Hippolytus, Origen, Jerome, Athanasius, Augustine, and Bernard of Clairvaux, have viewed the book as an allegory of Christ's love for His bride, the Church.

It is a book about lovemaking from an author who had 700 wives and 300 concubines (women who took his heart away from the Lord. 1 Kings 11:1-4). Rabbi Akiba, the leading rabbi of the Bar Kochbavolt (132-135 A.D.) is quoted in the Mishnah:

“In the entire world there is nothing to equal the day on which the Song of Songs was given to Israel. All the writings are holy, but the Song of Songs is most Holy.”

Mishnah Yadaim 3:5

(Due to his support, all questions about the place of the Song of Songs in the canon of the Scriptures were silenced.)

Inspiration of the Book

This book *is* inspired; it was part of the Scriptures when Jesus Christ was here on the earth. He put His imprimatur on the entire volume when He said, “The Scripture cannot be broken” (John 10:35).

It was the favorite book of D.L. Moody, C.H. Spurgeon, and St. John of the Cross. John Gill, a Puritan preacher, developed 122 sermons from it; Bernard of Clairvaux, a French mystic, brought forth 86 teachings from Chapter 1 alone.

Some say that it is not quoted in the NT, yet there are fragments everywhere:

- “The well of living water” (John 4)
- “The veiled woman” (1 Corinthians 11)
- “The precious fruit” (James 5:7)
- “The spotless bride” (Ephesians 5:27)
- “Unquenchable love” (1 Corinthians 13:8)
- “Love strong as death” (John 15:13)
- “Ointment poured forth” (John 12:3)
- “Draw me” (John 6:44)
- “The Shepherd leading His flock” (John 10:4, 5, 27)
- “Fruits of righteousness” (Philippians 1:11).

It is an extremely difficult book to teach because it is so personal. It needs to be. And like a diamond, it has many facets, and each one reveals a unique beauty...

2 Timothy 3:16: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.”

But what are *this* book’s lessons?

Solomon

1] The song of songs, which *is* Solomon’s.

The repetition of the noun in the genitive makes it a superlative. *The* song, surpassing all other songs. (Cf. Holy of Holies, King of Kings, etc.)

As Israel’s third king, Solomon ruled from 971 to 931 B.C. Solomon was perhaps more gifted with literary skill than any other king of Israel for he wrote 3,000 proverbs and 1,005 songs (1 Kings 4:32). It is appropriate that a subject as wonderful as romantic love is described in sublime language by a competent human author, writing of course under the Holy Spirit’s inspiration. Interestingly, of the more than 1,000 songs Solomon wrote, only this one was designed by God to be included in the Biblical canon. Solomon is mentioned by name in six other verses: Song of Songs 1:5; 3:7, 9, 11; 8:11-12.

Scholars differ widely on the structure of the Song—its unity or lack of it—the nature of its metaphors, and the nature of the love extolled by the Song. In short, almost every verse has been the subject of lively debate by the Song’s interpreters. Probably no other book of the Bible has such a variegated tapestry of interpretation.

Many evangelical scholars interpret the Song of Songs as a lyric poem that has both unity and logical progression. The major sections of the Song deal with courtship (1:2-3:5), a wedding (3:6-5:1), and maturation in marriage (5:2-8:4). The Song concludes with a climactic statement about the nature of love (8:5-7) and an epilogue explaining how the love of the couple in the Song began (8:8-14).

What is the historical narrative underlying the opera?

Two, or a Triangle?

A key factor—even among those who take the text quite literally—is whether there are two or three characters in the book.

Over 100 years ago, Ewald, the great German critic, who has been called the father of “higher” criticism, suggested the following view:

In the hill country north of Jerusalem there was a family in charge of a vineyard belonging to King Solomon. The young shepherdess had been won by a shepherd who had drawn her heart to himself and they were intending to marry. But King Solomon, as he rode along the lane one day, saw this young shepherdess in the vineyard, and his heart went out to her. He determined to win her for himself, and so tried by blandish-

ments to stir up her affections. But she was true to her sylvan admirer. Ultimately the King has her kidnaped and taken to his palace, to the royal harem, and there again he pressed his suit and tried to win her from her shepherd lover in the hills.

Sometimes she was almost tempted to yield, for her case seemed a hopeless one, but then she would remember him, her former lover, and she would say, “No, I cannot turn from him. I am my beloved’s, and his desire is toward me.” Eventually King Solomon set her free and she went back to the one she loved.

This view has been widely accepted among many, but has some serious problems:

- 1) Although indulged by many liberal theologians, this view would seem to maintain a low view of the Bible.
- 2) This would make King Solomon “the villain” of the piece. While he did, indeed, in his later years, fail miserably, he is portrayed in a positive light (Mt 12:42). He is a type of the Prince of Peace, succeeding David after years of warfare. (Yet David also is a “type” of Christ, despite his grievous sin.)
- 3) Also, this view would dismiss some of the most lovely and tender passages of this little book as mere seduction instead of sincere and holy love. Cynicism would thus replace the very passages that have thrilled readers through the centuries. It reduces the erotic scenes to premarital lust rather than the beauty of sexual relations *within* marriage.
- 4) There is, however, another sinister possibility that will be deferred until Tape 8.

The Story Behind the Opera

In the mountain district of Ephraim, King Solomon had a vineyard (8:11), and he let it out to an Ephraimite family as keepers.

The husband and father were apparently passed away, but there was a mother and at least two sons and two daughters. The older daughter, called Shulamite, is the “Cinderella” of the piece. Her brothers did not appreciate her and foisted hard tasks upon her, denying her the privileges that a growing girl might have expected in a Jewish home. “My

mother’s sons were angry with me.” (Half-brothers?) “Mine own vineyard I have not kept.” She had no opportunity to look after herself. She was sunburned but naturally comely.

One day she encounters a handsome stranger-shepherd, who views her as without blemish. Friendship ripens to affection, and finally, love. He promises to return and make her his bride.

Her brothers, skeptical, regard her as deceived by this stranger.

He is gone a long time. She would dream of him in the darkness, she trusted him.

One day a glorious cavalcade arrives, and the attendants announce, “The King has sent for you.” In obedience, she responds. When she looks into the face of the King, behold the King was the shepherd who had won her heart: “I am my beloved’s, and his desire is toward me.”

[(Fruchtenbaum:) *Shulamite* in Hebrew is merely the feminine form of the masculine name of Solomon. The story is of “Mr. and Mrs. Solomon.”]

This appears consistent to the Biblical presentation—from Genesis to Revelation—of the Shepherd who came from heaven’s highest glory down to this dark world that He might woo and win a bride for Himself. He went away, but He said, “I will come again, and receive you unto Myself.”

Alternative Interpretations

S. Craig Glickman quotes a volume written on the history of the Song of Songs during the Middle Ages:

“Over five hundred commentaries on the song remain with us from the first seventeen hundred years alone. Yet after these five hundred and perhaps more, the Westminster Assembly observed in 1657 that the commentaries customarily increased the cloud of obscurity they had hoped to remove.” (Glickman, p. 173)

There is also some disagreement over the bride in this love song, summarized by three major views about the woman:

- 1) She is one of his wives (and it isn’t important to know her identity);
- 2) She is the daughter of Pharaoh (1 Kings 3:1; 7:8; 9:16; S of S 1:9)

3) She is Abishag (1 Kings 1:1-4; 2:13-25).

The daughter-of-Pharaoh view makes her a Gentle woman, an appealing conjecture for those favoring an Church-oriented allegorical interpretation. However, Pharaoh's daughter was more likely simply a political link to guarantee peace and good relations between the two countries.

Abishag

Abishag was a beautiful young woman who spent her youth working in the fields and vineyards and was selected to lie beside the elderly King David and serve his needs during his dying years. She came from an area called Shunam, presumably in the Galilee. (Attempts to locate the historical site have proven fruitless.)

The text is clear that her virginity was not taken away by the elderly King David (1 Kings 1:4). Her ministry to him was completely a matter of physical care, not sexual pleasure.

Solomon, part of the household at that time, became deeply attached to her. When his brother Adonijah tried to get his mother's approval for taking Abishag to wife (since he lost the kingdom to Solomon) Solomon was enraged and had Beniah his executioner kill Adonijah (1 Kings 2:21-25).

Abishag was not a lady of the courts—she was a country girl. She worked in the fields under the hot sun and was not used to expensive clothes or the exotics of the nobility. She was also a natural beauty (like my Nan!)

Literal

There are those who feel that this lyric poem deals only with subject of Biblical lovemaking. [Fruchtenbaum]. A number of books focus on this aspect. [Hocking, et al]

The love relationship between a man and a woman—the courtship, the wedding night, and the subsequent sexual adjustments of the young couple—all are fruitfully treated.

So explicit are these aspects that because of its erotic content, the rabbis forbade the book to be read by anyone under the age of 30.

Indeed, of all the many books on marriage that are available in Christian and secular bookstores, none of them can possibly improve on the Biblical teaching found in this Song of Songs. Here is romantic love for married couples that exceeds our greatest dreams and expectations. Here is a manual on sex that beats all secular viewpoints on how a man and a woman should make love. There is no way to escape the fact that this book is quite sensual. Glickman summarized it this way:

“Sensuous love with erotic overtones is God's intent for the marriage relationship. The distortion of that relationship has no doubt abased this dimension of love, but that does not justify placing such experience—or Scripture's Song about it—into the inactive file of living.” (Glickman, p. 9)

The secular world has drowned us with its encouragements toward illicit affairs, easy divorce, the glories of promiscuity and joys of adulterous relationships. While critical of Christian viewpoints, it has done nothing to improve our marriages or satisfy the longings of our hearts. The exploitation of sex—and the disavowal of the marriage and the family itself in our culture—has sown the wind and we now are reaping the whirlwind.

This book is intended to improve dying or empty, boring marriages; to increase your love for your spouse; and, to illuminate true sexual and romantic understanding.

But there's more.

Allegorical

Another common view among both Jewish and Christian evangelicals is the *allegorical* view. Some see it as representing God's love for Israel. (Israelis, indeed, portrayed as the “wife” of Yaweh in Hosea, Ezekiel, et al. Cf. Isa 49:18; 61:10; 62:5; Joel 2:16.)

Others see it as a “type” of Christ's love for the Church (Ironside, Hudson Taylor, et al.)

All Scripture speaks in some way of the glory and beauty of our Messiah (Psalm 40:7; Luke 24:44).

John the Baptist, the last of the Old Testament prophets, recognized Christ as the Bridegroom (Jn 3:29), as Christ Himself also claimed (Mt 9:15). Paul goes even further (Eph 5:22-32). Also, Revelation 18:23; 21:2, 9; 22:17.

Chapter 1

Review

1] The song of songs, which is Solomon's.

The repetition of the noun in the genitive makes it a superlative. *The* song, surpassing all other songs. (Cf. Holy of Holies, King of Kings, etc.)

As Israel's third king, Solomon ruled from 971 to 931 B.C. Solomon was perhaps more gifted with literary skill than any other king of Israel for he wrote 3,000 proverbs and 1,005 songs (1 Kings 4:32). It is appropriate that a subject as wonderful as romantic love is described in sublime language by a competent human author, writing of course under the Holy Spirit's inspiration. Interestingly, of the more than 1,000 songs Solomon wrote, only this one was designed by God to be included in the Biblical canon. Solomon is mentioned by name in six other verses: Song of Songs 1:5; 3:7, 9, 11; 8:11-12.

“Exceeded all the kings of the earth in riches and in wisdom” (1 Kgs 10:23).

He controlled the caravan trade in gold and spices, and his merchant fleet brought back sandalwood, precious stones, gold, silver, ivory, apes, and peacocks (1 Kgs 9:26-28; 10:11, 14-15, 22). He imported horses from Cilicia and chariots from Egypt for sale to the kings of the Hittites and Aram, while building his own force of 12,000 horses and 1,400 chariots (1 Kgs 10:26-29). He also imported wives from Moab, Ammon, Edom, Phoenicia, and from the Hittites. His harem included 700 wives and 300 concubines (1 Kgs 11:1-3).

His building exploits included the Temple and his elaborate palace complex, which included a separate dwelling for the daughter of Pharaoh—his most politically consequential of the wives (1 Kgs 6:38-7:1, 8).

His throne was of ivory overlaid with gold. No one valued silver much in the days of Solomon (1 Kgs 10:18-21).

The Law of the King (Deut 17:14-20) instructs the king not to multiply horses, wives, silver, and gold (listed in that order!). It was Solomon's love of foreign women that led to idolatry and the dissolution of the kingdom (1 Kgs 11:1, 4, 9-11). In the book of Ecclesiastes, the jaded connoisseur declares them all “vanity” (Eccl 2:4-11).

King David and King Solomon lived very wicked lives, with half a hundred concubines and quite too many wives. But when old age came creeping on, they both were filled with qualms, so Solomon wrote the Proverbs, and David wrote the Psalms. (Bloch, p. 22)

Preparing For the Wedding Feast

Fruchtenbaum—Three reflections (1:2-2:7):

- 1) 1:2-8 Preparing for the Wedding Feast
- 2) 1:9-14 At the Wedding Feast
- 3) 1:15-2:7 In the Bridal Chamber

Thy Love Is Better than Wine

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

“Kiss”: the father of the Prodigal Son kissed him upon his neck—for forgiveness and restoration. Here, however, they are on the mouth: the kiss of *intimacy*.

There is phonetic word play between “kiss” and “wine.”

קִּיּוּם, *mesh-ee-kaw'*, Kisses; kiss
שָׁאָה, *shaagah*, drink; to give to drink, irrigate, drink, water; cause to drink water [The association between kissing and wine is made more explicit in 8:1-2.] The kisses appear to a yearning for foreplay.

Three Words for Love

דָּוֶדִּים (*dodim* (6X in the Song), is referring to sexual love; equivalent to the Greek *eros* (Song 1:2; 1:4; 4:10(2X); 5:1; 7:13; Cf. Prov 7:18; Ezek 16:8;

23:17). The root word means to carouse, swing, rock, fondle, love, and to move by thrusts and pushes. From both the usage and the root, sexual love is clearly in view.

אָהַב *'ahav*, equivalent to the Greek *agape*, a commitment of the will. (Move on this in verse 4.)

ἠγάπη *ra'eyva*, equivalent to the Greek *phileo*, a love of the emotions in response to attraction, friendship, etc. The root means to guard, to care for, to tend, to delight in someone particularly, to take pleasure in.

Sexual love is initiated by the man. It is the husband's leadership. Christ initiates His love toward us (Rom 5:8); our capacity to love is based on His love for us (1 John 4:19).

Sexual love is to be enjoyed. Wine is here used as a symbol of celebration (Prov 31:6, 7). She sees her husbands sexual responses to her as better than any human celebration on earth! (Cf. Heb 13:4 is a key point for those who have hesitancy in enjoying sex.)

Bed: אָהַב *coitus*, refers to sexual intercourse.
[זָרָה: noun nom. fem. sing.; sperm (זָרָה) to conceive, Rom 9.10); sexual impurity (Rom 13.13).]

God invented sex, not *Playboy* magazine.

The joy of intimacy is also true of our relationship with the Lord, isn't it? Nothing can compare with His presence—at His table; in the woods; or while on our knees...

3] Because of the savour of thy good ointments thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee.

At the banquet, the entire palace will be sprinkled with perfume. It is interesting how our prayers are synonymous with fragrance: the Golden (incense) Altar; Ps 141:2; Jer 44:5, 8, 17; Mal 1:11; Rev 8:3, 4; et al., as a few samples.

How does *your* lover smell?

Name: character, temperament, inward spirit.

Ecc1 7:1: "A good name [character] is better than precious ointment."

His Chambers

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 (*dad*) more than wine: the upright love (*ahab*) thee.

Draw me: unless you draw me, invite me, reach out to me...I can't come. But if you draw me, I will run! Another desire is to be drawn, pulled, enveloped by love itself (John 15; 6:44).

Before the king became her lover, she acknowledged him as her lord.

אָהַב *'ahab* - love 169X, lover(s) 19X, friend(s) 12X.

Aleph = First; leader; strength.

Beth = house.

Ab = leader of the house; father.

Add the *heh* (the Spirit) = essence of the Father = Love.

[beloved 5X, liketh 1X, lovely 1X, loving 1X, 1) to love; human love for another, includes family, and sexual; human appetite for objects such as food, drink, sleep, wisdom; human love for or to God; act of being a friend, lover (participle); friend (participle) God's love toward man; to individual men; to people Israel; etc.]

Intimacy requires commitment as its prelude. Sexual love (*dod* or *eros*) is only to be practiced within the concept of *ahab* or *agape*, commitment love. Otherwise, it is merely lust.

Are you still at the "holding hands" stage with Him? Or other things and priorities that you are clinging to keeping you from that intimacy?

5] I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon.

"Black": used of skin, hair, and color, but never of race. The tents of Kedar: the black tents of the Bedouins, made of black goat skins and hair.

Kedar: known for opulence (Isa 21:16; 60:7; Jer 49:28-29; Ezek 27:21); also, because the name Kedar involves a wordplay on the root קָדַח "to be dark, black."

“Curtains”: used for the sides of tent (Isa 54:2; Jer 4:20; 10:20; 49:29; Hab 3:7). Used of the Tabernacle (Ex 26:27; 2 Sam 7:2; 1 Chr 17:1).

Daughters of Jerusalem: a kind of chorus; a foil to the Shulamite and the audience. Like the women who accompany Jephthah’s daughter in her mourning, or the women of Bethlehem who come out to greet Naomi, they represent the social milieu in which the lovers move, answering to their need for public testimony and public validation.

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.

Her own vineyard: her own feminine beauty and charms. She failed to maintain her appearance. This seems to be her only regret; there is no reason for a Christian not to take care of themselves.

[During courtship, we took special pains to look our best. Why not now? *Cosmos*, to bring order out of chaos. Same root as *cosmetics*.]

This reminds her of her lover posing as a simple shepherd, concealing his true identity...

When we come into the company of the Lord, we, too, are overwhelmed by our inadequacy (Isa 6:5; et al).

“In my flesh dwelleth no good thing” (Rom 7:18).

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?

Where can I find you at work?

“Turneth aside” = as a veiled one; as a prostitute (Gen 38:14-15).

The king is also a shepherd. Our King is, indeed, a Shepherd:

The Good Shepherd (John 10:14)

The Great Shepherd (Heb 13:20)

The Chief Shepherd (1 Pet 5:4)

The “Daughters of Jerusalem” Respond

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.

“Go thy way forth”: the concept of marriage includes the concept of “leaving” as well as “cleaving” (Gen 2:23-24; quoted by Christ, Mt 19:5; Mk 10:7).

[Many “in-law” problems might be solved by application of this principle.]

Reflection #2: At the Wedding Banquet

(Between the ceremony and wedding night)

9] I have compared thee, O my love, to a company of horses in Pharaoh’s chariots.

Have you compared your wife to a horse lately? (Perhaps she has used certain parts of the equine anatomy in regards to you?)

In the ancient world it was different. Note the order in the Law of the King, Deut 17:14-20: horses, wives, and then silver, and gold, in that order. Solomon was a great lover of horses (1 Kgs 4:26; 10:26) and many came from Egypt (1 Kgs 10:28-29). These were imported from Egypt.

[Some positive features of horses: Job 39:19-25. I prefer mine several hundred at a time under a hood.]

However, the Hebrew text here is feminine singular. Mares were never used to draw chariots—only stallions. (Glickman, p. 173) She is compared to a filly among the royal stallions.

The word “love” is *ra`eyah*, a close personal friend.

10] Thy cheeks are comely with rows of jewels, thy neck with chains of gold.

Women then wore headdresses with leather straps that hung down upon their cheeks.

11] We will make thee borders (braids) of gold with studs of silver.

How is gold braided? By pounding and beating it.

Silver is the metal of redemption. (The Tabernacle rested on silver sockets; silver was the redemption coin; it was also the blood money...)

He is taking care of her, reassuring her. Notice that he only has good things to say about her. There's nothing like encouragement—every day...

[Note the plural “we.” The Trinity?]

Shulamite Responds, vv. 12-14

12] While the king sitteth at his table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof.

The King's table (daily): 190 bushels of fine flour, 390 bushels of meal, 10 fat oxen, 20 oxen out of pasture, 100 sheep besides harts, roebucks, fallow deer, and fatted fowl (1 Kings 4).

Spikenard came from the stem and leaves of a fragrant plant of the Himalayas (Cf. 4:13-14); sweet; very expensive. It was also a spice that aroused sexual passion (Isa 3:24; Esther 2:12). Cf. Mary, and Judas' disdain, Mark 14:3-9; John 12:3-5.

We are reminded how believers—like the bride of Jesus Christ—should be a sweet smell in His nostrils (Cf 2 Cor 2:14-16; Eph 5:2; Phil 4:18).

13] A bundle of myrrh is my wellbeloved unto me; he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts.

Referring to the ancient practice of women wearing a bundle of myrrh from a chain hanging around their necks to counteract body odor.

Myrrh: an aromatic resin from the stems and branches of a shrub that grows in Arabia, Abyssinia and Somalia, which was used to perfume clothing (Ps 45:9) and for the body (Esther 2:12). In another book of Solomon's, the book of Proverbs, it is used in terms of sexual passion (Prov 7:17).

We may joke about it, but smells are important...

14] My beloved is unto me as a cluster of copher in the vineyards of En Gedi.

Copher was the cypress or henna flower, a plant with fragrant yellow and white flowers.

[En Gedi was an oasis where David hid from Saul...]

Application: note the importance of verbalizing your appreciation of your mate. This can be physical beauty, behavior, little things... whatever. Do you tell your wife—each day—that you love her and what she means to you? Also, note the importance of addressing the physical aspects. Cleanliness and adornments have a critical purpose here.

The Bridal Chamber

The Man Begins

15] Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thou hast doves' eyes.

Fair = excellent; ravishing; wonderful. He returns her expressions of excellence. The dove is faithful to its mate for life. It is also the symbol for peace. *Ra'eyah* for Love. My darling.

She Responds

16] Behold, thou art fair, my beloved, yea, pleasant: also our bed is green.

Same as before, but a grammatical change of gender. In v. 7 she asked for two things: to be fed and that she might have rest. She is fed in v. 12; she finds rest in his house in v. 16.

17] The beams of our house are cedar, and our rafters of fir.

Cedars and firs are not native to Jerusalem, but came from the north, near Shulamite's home.

Chapter 2

Review

(Fruchtenbaum) Three reflections 1:2-2:7

- 1) 1:2-8 Preparing for the Wedding Feast
- 2) 1:9-14 At the Wedding Feast
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Chapter 2

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

She then describes her unworthiness, comparing herself to a simple country flower, an autumn crocus common in the Plain of Sharon (Isa 35:1-2; Hosea 14:6-8) and to a common lily found in the valleys of Israel.

But Solomon, recognizing her need for reassurance, interrupts her comparison...

[Of 117 verses, 55 are clearly from her lips; another 19 probably hers. Unusual for an ancient love poem.]

2] As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters.

A common flower perhaps, but one that surpasses everything around it.

“Thorns”: not the thorn of flower stem, such as a rose, but the thorn bushes plentiful in the area (2 Kings 14:9).

Shulamite speaks and begins to describe their first sexual union... it will also be discussed in greater detail later in the book.

The figure of the bride and the bridegroom is a frequent symbol in Scripture (Isa 61:10; 62:5; Jer 7:34; 16:9; 25:10; 33:11; Mt 9:15; 25:1-10; Mk 2:19, 20; Jn 3:29; Rev 18:23; Cf. Eph 5:22-32; 2 Cor 11:2).

No one has ever entered into the truth of communion with Christ until He Himself has become the all-absorbing passion the soul. He isn't to be No. 1 on a list of 10; but rather, No. 1 on a list of 1!

My Beloved

3] As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste.

Apples (actually, apricots?) were, in the ancient world, erotic symbols. (Some commentators have viewed this verse as a reference to oral sex being performed by the bride.)

“Under his shadow”: (Ps 17:8; 36:7; 57:1; 63:7; 91:1).

4] He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love.

“Banqueting house” = Lit. “house of wine”; a common reference to the bridal chamber.

A banner was a device to find your place in a crowd. It was also used to acknowledge a victory or triumph.

“Love” is *ahavah*.

5] Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples: for I am sick of love.

Aroused through the foreplay, satisfaction is now sought by the act itself. This is the sense of “I am lovesick.”

- 6] His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me.
They become one.

In the sex act a man and woman become one:
In the marriage (Gen 2:23-25; Mt 19:4-6);
or outside of marriage (1 Cor 6:16).

This experience gives rise to Shulamite's admonition:

The Warning

- 7] I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awaken love, till it please.

“Arouse”: to excite the passions; “Pleased”: to satisfy or to fulfill.

Sexual passions should not be aroused unless they can also be satisfied or fulfilled; otherwise they will lead to frustration. This verse is a refrain repeated two more times (3:5 and 8:4). It emphasizes that sex should be enjoyed the way God intended. It is a defense of *marital* love; it warns against premarital or extramarital sex.

Consider:

- Adultery is prohibited in Ex 20:14.
- Incest, adultery, homosexuality, and bestiality is condemned in Lev 18:6-23 and 20:10-21.
- Adultery, prostitution, extramarital sex is condemned in Prov 5:15-23; 6:24-35.
- Homosexuality and all kinds of sexual immorality is condemned in Rom 1:24-32; 13:13.
- Incest and all kinds of sexual immorality is condemned in 1 Cor 5:1-13.

Furthermore, 1 Cor 6:9, 10; Gal 5:19-21; Eph 5:3-5; Col 3:5, 6; and Rev 21:8; 22:15 not only condemn sexual immorality—they warn that its continual practice reveals that you are *not saved!*

Read Heb 13:4: “Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.”

Mark Twain: “It isn’t the parts of the Bible that I don’t understand that bother me. It is the parts of the Bible that I do understand!”

[Some commentators see the following section (2:8 - 3:5) as retrospective reflections on the courtship period...]

- 8] The voice of my beloved! behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills.

This seems to reflect on a springtime in the Galilee where her lover paid her a visit, with the eagerness of a gazelle...

- 9] My beloved is like a roe (gazelle) or a young hart (stag): behold, he standeth behind our wall, he looketh forth at (through) the windows, shewing himself through the lattice.

What is a gazelle? It looks like a deer, runs swiftly, and is most graceful. (In this book it is mentioned 7X). It was a symbol of sexual virility, a most complimentary term.

[Most guys are more like a “bull in a china shop.” Biblical standards for masculinity emphasize strength and beauty dwelling together in the same body. Men need to be romantic. Are you a “gazelle type?” Or a gorilla?]

“Wall” refers to the wall of the house itself, rather than the outer wall surrounding the house, which would require a different Hebrew word. It would seem that he is looking through the window ...

“looking” means by fixation for reflection and meditation.

“Shewing himself”—peering, with a twinkle; a gleam of the eye. He is feasting his eyes...

She Recalls his Words

- 10] My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.

[He has come north after a long winter; he seems to desire her and to defer his business...]

- 11] For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone;

- 12] The flowers appear on the earth: the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle(dove) is heard in our land;

Turtledove: not so much a singing bird; a migratory bird, a bird of passage. It signals that spring has arrived.

13] The fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.

Spring is in the air.

14] O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely.

Her lover's pleading concludes; she is remaining in her house like a dove or wood-pigeon that hides in the rocky places. (Cf. Jer 48:28. Like the *Refuge in Edom*?)

“Countenance” is in the plural, as an amplification. The fullness of her beauty...

[“Cleft in the rock”: are you *in* the “rock”? 1 Cor 10:4; Rom 9:33; 1 Pet 2:8]

“Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Grace hath hid me safe in Thee”

She goes forward, and speaks as they walk:

The Foxes

15] Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes.

Little foxes burrow holes through the earth and this is a problem in vineyards as the growth and prosperity of the vine suffers. (Foxes are proverbial destroyers in Neh 4:3; Lam 5:18; and Ezek 14:4.)

Here the “foxes” are the little (and great) enemies which threaten, gnaw, and destroy love before it ripens to full enjoyment.

She is suggesting that everything that will challenge the peace of love be rendered harmless or removed early. “Catch the little foxes...”

Loyalty

16] My beloved is mine, and I am his: he feedeth (shepherds) among the lilies.

She pictures him at work; he has business to attend to; but she is confident of their love remaining true to each other.

Commitment is the foundation of a good marriage—not sex or “falling in love.” When we make vows, God expects us to keep them. “Till death do us part” (Rom 7:1-3; 1 Cor 7:39).

17] Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether.

“Bether” = separation.

She frees him to attend to his work (Fox #1) in the confidence that when it is done he will give her his undivided attention (Fox #2).

Application

Couples in courtship often defer potential problems areas with the attitude that “we can work these things out when we are married.” This brings unnecessary baggage into the union, and result in tensions. Little “foxes” need to be identified and dealt with. It is a question of priorities.

This includes the need for the husband to attend to “earning the bread” (and a future). Prov 24:27-34 (v.27 is not popular with the ladies!).

The coin can be flipped over—there is another side to this issue: The husband also needs to put suitable boundaries around the demands of his work to reserve (quality) time for the family. [In my own case: major guilt on this one!...]

But *both* need to schedule their activities to provide for quality time for the love relationship.

This is especially difficult for the self-employed; and for those in ministry, where demands placed have little to do with “economic” boundaries...

But this goes for the girls and housework, too. Among of the biggest rivals for the husband are *the children!* (Check you refrigerator when

you get home: *whose* favorite things are there?) Part of the solution can be the tailoring of the career goals... See the *Vortex Strategy* series for further information.

Chapters 3 & 4

Review: Three Words for Love

דָּדִים *dadim* (6X in the Song) is referring to sexual love; equivalent to the Greek *eros*. (Song 1:2; 1:4; 4:10(2X); 5:1; 7:13. Cf. Prov 7:18; Ezek 16:8; 23:17.) The root word means to carouse, swing, rock, fondle, love, and to move by thrusts and pushes. From both the usage and the root, sexual love is clearly in view.

אָהַב *'ahav*, equivalent to the Greek *agape*, a commitment of the will. (More on this in verse 4.)

רָצָה *ra'eyah*, equivalent to the Greek *phileo*, a love of the emotions in response to attraction, friendship, etc. The root means to guard, to care for; to tend, to delight in someone particularly, to take pleasure in.

אָהַב *'ahab* - love 169X, lover(s) 19X, friend(s) 12X. Intimacy requires commitment as its prelude. Sexual love (*dad* or *eros*) is only to be practiced within the concept of *ahab* or *agape*, commitment love. Otherwise, it is merely lust.

Daughters of Jerusalem: a kind of chorus; a foil to the Shulamite and the audience. Like the women who accompany Jephthah's daughter in her mourning, or the women of Bethlehem who come out to greet Naomi, they represent the social milieu in which the lovers move, answering to their need for public testimony and public validation.

Series of Reflections (Fruchtenbaum:)

- 1) 1:2-8: Preparing for the Wedding Feast
- 2) 1:9-14: At the Wedding Feast
- 3) 1:15-2:7 In the Bridal Chamber
- 4) 2:8-17 A Springtime Visit
- 5) 3:1-5 Dreams of Separation

Chapter 3

Dreams of Separation

After her lover leaves, she recalls a recurring dream during the winter months when she was separated from him...

- 1] By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not.

“Night” is in the plural, implying a recurring dream.

Nothing more frightening than to lose the sense of the Lord's presence. David: “Thou didst hide thy face and I was troubled” (Ps 30:7).

Sometimes it is admonitory. It can be love's way of bringing the soul to a realization of something cherished or allowed that grieves the Holy Spirit of God. Or it may be the testing of faith to see whether one can trust in the dark as well as in the light.

“But flowers need night's cool sweetness,
The moonlight and the dew;
So Christ from one who loved Him,
His presence oft withdrew.”

Rutherford

What do a skydiver and a surfer have in common? There are some invitations you can't postpone. When it's time to move, you need to respond or you miss out.

- 2] I will rise now, and go about the city in the streets, and in the broad ways I will seek him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not.

The pain of absence... Is He playing hard to get? Or teaching us not to take Him for granted!

- 3] The watchmen that go about the city found me: to whom I said, Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?

Are they of any help? No, she must find Him herself. She no sooner inquires of his whereabouts when she spots him... “And ye shall seek Me, and find Me, when ye shall search for Me with all your heart.” Jer 29:13.

4] It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found him whom my soul loveth: I held him, and would not let him go, until I had brought him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her that conceived me.

The dream that began as a nightmare ends happily in the first opportunity of privacy and security. While only a dream, it reflects the long winter of separation. This passage ends with the same words of 2:7:

5] I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please.

Again, the key thought is that arousal should not occur until it can be satisfied. God has such a high view of sex that He does not want it to be cheapened by lust.

The rest of the chapter is of an entirely different character. It sets forth the truth of union rather than of restored communion.

The Jewish Marriage

Five distinct steps in ancient Jewish marriage:

- 1) **The Betrothal:** the time when the marriage arrangement for the marriage was contracted.
- 2) **The Wedding Procession:** accomplished when the groom went to the house of the bride to fetch her (e.g. Matt 25:1; Psalm 45), or sent a wedding party to fetch her to his home, and he would go out to meet her (1 Maccabees 9:37-39).
- 3) **The Wedding Ceremony:** the two are recognized to be husband and wife in a legal sense.
- 4) **The Wedding Feast or Banquet:** Follows the wedding ceremony;
- 5) **The Wedding Night:** the married couple become one in the flesh through the first sexual union.

The Wedding Procession

Solomon sends a wedding party from Jerusalem to Galilee to fetch Shulamite for the wedding ceremony in Jerusalem. We see the party returning towards Jerusalem, with the bride in their midst...

6] Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant?

Royal honors are accorded as seen in the lavish expenditure of spices making smoke and fragrance.

Myrrh: ingredient of holy oil (Ex 30:23-25);

Frankincense: ingredient of holy incense (Ex 30:34-35).

7] The royal accouterments are recognized. She is being treated like a queen.

7] Behold his bed, which is Solomon's; threescore valiant men are about it, of the valiant of Israel.

“Bed”: *mitah*, or travel-couch, or royal litter.

Sixty men: Royal palace guard; not just window dressing, but real capable warriors.

8] They all hold swords, being expert in war: every man hath his sword upon his thigh because of fear in the night.

Cf. 1 Maccabees 9:37-41: Jonathan and Simon attack the children of Jambri and the wedding procession...

9] King Solomon made himself a chariot of the wood of Lebanon.

“Chariot” or “bed of state?”: *apiryon*, a bed with a canopy, (probably of Egyptian derivation); the wedding bed. Made of cedar, in accord with the decor of the bridal chamber (1:17).

10] He made the pillars thereof of silver, the bottom thereof of gold, the covering of it of purple, the midst thereof being paved with love, for the daughters of Jerusalem.

Cushion of purple, adorned with a tapestry procured by the daughters of Jerusalem.

11] Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold king Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart.

The crown: כִּטְרוֹן *'atarah*, crown, wreath. This was not the royal crown, but a wedding crown, a custom of ancient Israel, made by his mother, Bathsheba. (This practice was discontinued with the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. Today a wine glass is broken during a Jewish wedding ceremony to symbolize that destruction. Even on the occasion of a Jew's happiest day—the wedding day—Jerusalem must be remembered.)

At this point the wedding ceremony occurs. The wedding banquet was reflected in 1:9-14. The following reflection describes, again, the wedding night. The earlier (3rd) reflection of the wedding night was from Shulamite; this reflection is from the groom's point of view. (Except for 4:1-6, it is he that speaks...)

Chapter 4

The Wedding Night

He begins with a sevenfold praise of her beauty:

1] Behold, thou art fair; my love; behold, thou art fair; thou hast doves' eyes within thy locks: thy hair is as a flock of goats, that appear from mount Gilead.

[Four times he will declare her fair (2X, v.1; v.10) “Without spot,” v.7.]

“Within thy locks” = behind your veil. It was customary for the bride to be veiled on the wedding night (Gen 24:65; 29:21-30).

“...goats”: In Israel, Syrian goats are mostly black, with silken hair. On a steep slope, giving the appearance of hanging down on the sides of cliffs. The slopes of Mt. Gilead rising from the Jordan Valley are very bare with a brown-bronze color... Hair is the woman's glory (1 Cor 11:15. Cf. v.14!)

Hair speaks also of two things: consecration and submission. The Nazarites were not to cut their hair as a sign of their commitment (Num 6:5; Samson: Judg 13:5; 16:5). Paul alluded to the long hair of a woman as a sign that she had placed herself under his covering (1 Cor 11:15).

2] Thy teeth are like a flock of sheep that are even shorn, which came up from the washing; whereof every one bear twins, and none is barren among them.

Sheep, washed, shorn, and white. Matched; none missing... a set of pearls half-hidden in the mouth...

Teeth also speak of our ability to assimilate truth. (Heb 5:12-14).

3] Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet, and thy speech is comely: thy temples are like a piece of a pomegranate within thy locks.

Thread of scarlet: cf. Rahab's salvation. The scarlet thread from Gen 3:15 to His vesture in Rev 19...

“When I see the blood, I will pass over you” (Ex 12:13).

It is “the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:7).

We have been redeemed to God by the precious blood of Christ, as of an unblemished spotless lamb, foreknown indeed from the foundation of the world, but manifest in these last times for you. Do proclaim His Blood? Are your lips like a thread of scarlet?

Pomegranates: redness, tempered with ruby color. Mentioned over 30X in the Bible. Used as an indication of rank in the hem of the garment (Ex 28:39); and emblazoned on the Temple (1 Kgs 7:2; 2 Kgs 25:17; Jer 52:22). [Is there a “temple” pun here?]

The circular calyx at the end of the fruits looks like a little crown, and a tradition claims that Solomon used it as a model for the one he wore. The leaves are shiny, dark green; the flowers coral and waxy. The fruits make a syrup called grenadine.

Our temples suggest our thought life. Are our thoughts fruitful and good? Phil 4:8.

4] Thy neck is like the tower of David builded for an armory, whereon there hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men.

Long neck, adorned with ornaments...

Shields were often hung on tower walls (Ezek 27:11; 1 Macc 4:57). Solomon made 200 golden targets and 300 golden shields, and they were put into the house of the Forest of Lebanon (1 Kgs 10:16), which served as the royal army (Isa 22:8) and may have been known as the Tower

of David. These shields were later carried away by Pharaoh Shishak at the time of Rehoboam, Solomon's son, who replace them with brass shields for his bodyguard to use (1 Kgs 14:25-28; 2 Chr 12:9-11).

Is your peace a result of the Armor of God (Eph 6:10-18)?

5] Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins, which feed among the lilies.

Soft, attracting stroking.

Having described the sevenfold beauty of his bride (from the top down: her eyes, hair, teeth, mouth, temples, neck, and breasts), he anticipates their first intercourse.

6] Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, I will get me to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense.

What in other literature is called “the mount of Venus...”

Thou Art Fair...

7] Thou art all fair; my love; there is no spot in thee.

He is totally satisfied with his bride...

This is key message throughout the book. He views you through the filter of His blood. His blood has taken away all your faults, sin, defilement, and allows Him to be pleased with you for all eternity. One of the primary purposes of this book is to show you how our Shepherd-King sees *you*.

8] Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse, with me from Lebanon: look from the top of Amara, from the top of Shehir and Hermon, from the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards.

...to travel to ecstatic heights...

[He is the God of the Second Chance. The first time He said, “Come, let's go up to the mountains” she put Him off and lost the moment. But He comes back and says, “Let's go for it!”]

9] Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister-bridel: thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck.

“Spouse”: “Bride” (for the first time). The Hebrew word comes from a root which means to pierce through, and carries the meaning of that which is brought to completion (Cf. Ezek 27:4, 11).

10] How fair is thy love, my sister-bridel! how much better is thy love than wine! and the smell of thine ointments than all spices!

Dod, sexual love. Foreplay begins. Previously he used the Hebrew word, *yaphu*, for “beautiful” (v. 1), which refers to a visual impression (vv. 1-5); Now, using the word, *tovu*, also translated “beautiful,” he describes his physical experience of her.

“We love Him because He first loved us.” (1 John 4:19) His love for you is much more intense than your love for Him—even at the most intense moment you have ever experienced. There's passion in the heart of the Lord *for you*. You are His Bride.

11] Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honeycomb: honey and milk are under thy tongue; and the smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon.

A Garden Inclosed

12] A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed. Describing the female genitals in terms of a garden is not unusual in the literature of the ancient world.

Sealed, locked; access only to the rightful owner. A virgin.

13] Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits; camphire, with spikenard,

...for arousal...

“Orchard”: **פריה** *pardace*, foreign origin; similar to the Persian word for “paradise.”

14] Spikenard and saffron; calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense; myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices:

Saffron was obtained from the crocus in Israel and used as a condiment. **Calamus** was plant with a reed-like stem and tawny color imported from India. **Cinnamon** came from the East Indies, and **aloes** from India.

15] A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon.

Sprouting from within...

The Winds

At this point, the bride speaks:

16] Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits.

The west wind brings rain (1 Kings 18:44-45); The east wind is hot and withering (Gen 41:23; Job 27:27). The north wind clears the air with cool breezes (Job 37:21-22); The south wind bring warmth (Job 37:17).

The north and south winds promote growth if they come and interchange at proper times. As a result the entire garden becomes a sea of incense and fragrance, blowing out its odor with fragrant plants.

The north wind may be blowing to teach us to walk by faith and not by feeling. To demonstrate our love for Him through diligence—and not tingly feelings, or the like. Feelings are fickle. They are affected by what you ate, by what someone said this morning, by the media, the weather, or the current news. Not so with faith. It is totally independent of the circumstances. The Lord wants us to enjoy the stability and surety of faith.

A north wind can give us the opportunity to show Him the depth of our commitment and gratitude, without that immediate response which can cloud our motives...

* * *

Next: Section 2: Sexual Adjustments in Marriage

Chapter 5

Review

Here is a book with only 117 verses and 470 Hebrew words (47 of which appear only in this book), yet it is among the least studied and most emotionally controversial.

This book is inspired; it was part of the Scriptures when Jesus Christ was here on the earth. He put His imprimatur on the entire volume when He said, “The Scripture cannot be broken.” (John 10:35).

It was the favorite book of D.L. Moody, C.H. Spurgeon, and St. John of the Cross.

2 Timothy 3:16: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.”

It is perhaps the most difficult and mysterious book in the entire Bible. A cursory glance at the Song’s history of interpretation reveals a diversity of opinion unequaled in the study of any other Biblical work. The Song has been interpreted as:

- (a) an allegory,
- (b) an extended type,
- (c) a drama involving either two or three main characters,
- (d) a collection of Syrian wedding songs

There are those who feel that this lyric poem deals only with subject of Biblical lovemaking. [Fruchtenbaum]. A number of books focus on this aspect. [Hocking, et al]

The secular world has drowned us with its encouragements toward illicit affairs, easy divorce, the glories of promiscuity and joys of adulterous relationships. While critical of Christian viewpoints, it has done nothing to improve our marriages nor satisfy the longings of our hearts. The exploitation of sex—and the disavowal of the marriage and the family itself in our culture—has sown the wind and we now are reaping the whirlwind.

This book is intended to improve dying or empty, boring marriages; to increase your love for your spouse; to illuminate true sexual and romantic understanding.

Jewish tradition (the Mishnah, the Talmud, and the Targum) viewed the book as an allegorical picture of the love of God for Israel.

Church leaders, including Hippolytus, Origen, Jerome, Athanasius, Augustine, and Bernard of Clairvaux, have viewed the book as an allegory of Christ's love for His bride, the church.

A third view—the courtship between Christ and the individual believer—will also be explored, especially from this chapter.

Series of Reflections (Fruchtenbaum)

- 1) 1:2-8 Preparing for the Wedding Feast
- 2) 1:9-14 At the Wedding Feast
- 3) 1:15-2:7 In the Bridal Chamber
- 4) 2:8-17 A Springtime Visit
- 5) 3:1-5 Dreams of Separation
- 6) 3:6-11 The Wedding Procession
- 7) 4:1-5:1 The Wedding Night

Chapter 5

Solomon Comes into his Garden

1] I am come into my garden, my sister-bride; I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk: eat.

The spice referred to is balsam brought to Solomon in abundance by the Queen of Sheba (1 Kings 10:10). All point to the pinnacle of full enjoyment and satisfaction. [A refrain from the daughters of Jerusalem: O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.]

The chorus pronounces a sanction on the wedding union, and encourages them, now that they are husband and wife, to be drunk with sexual pleasure.

Applications from the Previous Session

Importance of verbalizing reemphasized. Importance of foreplay as a prelude to total enjoyment of the union. The importance of virginity. (But remember the comprehensiveness of His cleansing!) The mutual obligations that our bodies belong to each other (1 Cor 7:1-5).

Spiritually, He loves us individually and radically. But it is a courtship. He never invades our sovereignty!

Our Life = His Garden

We, too, as believers, are pictured as a “watered garden” (Isa 58:11; Jer 31:12).

And He has set us apart for Himself (Ps 4:3).

We are to be a source of fragrance and a source of fruit And He is a diligent husbandman (Phil 1:6, 11; Gal 5:22).

We are not merely to have the assurance of our own salvation; we are to be as watered gardens for Him.

[v. 13, 14: some of these yield their fragrance as the rain and dew fell on them; some send forth a subtle aroma when the rays of the sun warms them. Others never exude until they are pierced and sap flows forth...]

It takes both the north and the south wind to bear the best fruit. It takes both the cold of winter as well as the warmth of summer. (The best apples come from the northern climates. It takes cold to bring out the flavor.)

Remember Spurgeon's weathervane: Whichever way the wind blows, God is love.

“The Lord hath His way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of His feet.” (Nah 1:3; Cf. Rom 8:28).

The gardens are watered with living water (John 7:37-39).

[Parable of two seas, fed by the same source...]

Is your life touching others? What is hindering the outflow of the living water? Have we drawn too much to apply all this *spiritually*? “The volume of the book is written of me.”

- What does the marriage of Adam and Eve signify?
- What of the servant seeking the bride for Isaac in Gen 24?
- What of the love of Jacob for Rachel?
- What “mystery” does Asenath, the Gentile bride of Joseph, speak?
- What of Boaz and Ruth?
- What of Hosea purchasing his bride in the slavemarket?
- What does Paul emphasize in Eph 5 (25,26 and 31, 32)?

Four times he declared her fair (2X, v.1; v.10) “Without spot,” v.7. Earlier she had declared her wretchedness. Are we not also wretched? Don’t we take our places aside Job (42:5, 6) abhorring ourselves, repenting in dust and ashes? Don’t we kneel beside Isaiah and exclaim, “I am a man of unclean lips, and dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips (Isa 6:5)? Shouldn’t we join Peter and cry, “Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord” (Luke 5:8).

Yet He has washed us, and imputed to us *His* comeliness. Our Shepherd-King doesn’t say to us and say,

“I love you, *but...*”
“I love you *if...*”
“I’ll love you *when...*”

Never once does He say:

“You’re lovely, but maybe you could change your hairstyle.”
“You’re lovely, but you could lose a few pounds.”

He says, “**I love you—period!**”

“Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me.”

When He calls “Come with Me,” we cannot afford to draw back. He desires above everything else is to see His people finding satisfaction in Him. Remember the Letter to the Ephesians that He wrote (Rev 2:1-7). Have you lost your “first love?”

What will be the astonishment of those who never understood when the Bride is “snatched” away? (Harpazo) When the church is gone and the

heavenly procession has passed them by, what will their thoughts be then?

* * *

Section 2: Sexual Adjustments in Marriage

Chapter 5:2

Shulamite’s Troubled Dream

2] I sleep, but my heart waketh: it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me, my sister; my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night.

“Sleep, but my heart waketh” = a dream. (Cf. 3:1-4). A troubling dream in which her lover seeks admittance to her (Cf. 5:6).

Love: רַחֵם רַחֵם ra’yah, singling her out as one freely chosen by him for intimate relationship.

Bad timing? She refuses, based on the excuse in 5:3.

The fact that the lover no longer addressed her as “my bride” indicates there is a time lapse between verse 1 (the wedding night) and verse 2. The couple should no longer be regarded as newlyweds. But he did address her by other affectionate terms: **my sister** (five times he called her his sister (4:9-10, 12; 5:1-2) because in the ancient Near East “sister” was an affectionate term for one’s wife), **my darling** (cf. 1:9, 15; 2:2, 10, 13; 4:1, 7; 6:4), **my dove**, and **my flawless one** (cf. 4:7). This is the first record of his using all these terms of endearment.

His head and hair were covered with dew, as he had been outside. Dew in Israel was often heavy.

Withholding oneself from one’s mate is not Scriptural: 1 Cor 7:1-5.

Personal *spiritual* application: Rev 3:20 “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.” [Remember, this was spoken of the Laodicean church...]

Have you responded to Him? Are you guilty of the sin of lethargy?

It is remarkable how soon after a “high” we find ourselves in a broken fellowship. How soon after a “Jericho” we find ourselves in “Ai” (Josh 5, 6 vs. Josh 7).

3] I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them?

It appears inconvenient. (It is only a dream...) She said in her dream that she had already gotten ready for bed. But this trivial excuse for not opening the door revealed her indifference or apathy toward her husband. Somehow she had grown cool toward his advances. But he did not accept her excuse. He tried to open the door but failed and then left.

Have you responded to Him? Are you guilty of the sin of lethargy? Love is very sensitive. We are in a courtship!

A Closed Door

4] My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him.

Reaching through the opening, attempting to gain entrance. She has begun to respond, but too late. Then her compassion was aroused for him and she decided to open the door.

The Hebrew expression translated “my heart began to pound for him” is used elsewhere to express pity or compassion (e.g., Isa 16:11; Jer 31:20). It may not necessarily imply sexual arousal as some scholars have maintained. [Walvoord, John, and Zuck, Roy, in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*; see bibliography.]

5] I rose up to open to my beloved; and my hands dropped with myrrh, and my fingers with sweet smelling myrrh, upon the handles of the lock.

For practical purposes, she may as well not have been home.

When the beloved in her dream went to the door to open it for her husband (my lover, used of him six times in vv. 2, 4-6, 8), she found myrrh on the door handles and got some on her hands. Myrrh was sometimes associated with lovemaking (Prov 7:17; Song 4:6; 5:13). This may refer to the custom of a lover placing perfumed ointment on the bolt of the door

when he comes and she is not in. Perhaps the lover had put liquid myrrh on the door handles as a token of affection for his beloved. He had wanted more than relief from the discomfort of the night air.

My Beloved Had Withdrawn

6] I opened to my beloved; but my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone; my soul failed when he spake: I sought him, but I could not find him: I called him, but he gave me no answer.

He appears to have departed. “What, could ye not watch with me one hour?” (Mt 26:40).

She runs into the streets to search for him.

[Jeanne Guyon uses this passage to comment on “the dark night of the soul”; she was imprisoned in the Bastille for her commentary on Song of Songs!]

The Watchmen

7] The watchmen that went about the city found me, they smote me, they wounded me; the keepers of the walls took away my veil from me.

When she set out to look for him she was found and beaten by the city watchmen. In her first dream the watchmen helped her look for her lover (3:3), but this time they mistook her for a prostitute; she loses her upper garment in her escape. (Cf. Gen 39:12). She suffers the trauma of losing her position of her bridegroom’s protection.

8] I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, that ye tell him, that I am sick of love.

Waking from this troubling dream, she implores their aid in finding Him!

(Daughters of Jerusalem: a kind of chorus; a foil to the Shulamite and the audience. Like the women who accompany Jephthah’s daughter in her mourning, or the women of Bethlehem who come out to greet Naomi, they represent the social milieu in which the lovers move, answering to their need for public testimony and public validation.)

9] What is thy beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women? what is thy beloved more than another beloved, that thou dost so charge us?

What makes him so special? Why is He more to you than any other?

["O Fairest among women" could be sarcastic. Are you so self-centered that you fail to appreciate the uniqueness of your spouse?]

My Beloved

She responds vv 10-16.

10] My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand.

White: dazzling; stunning!

Ruddy: masculine; manly; macho.

Chiefest among 10,000: have you noticed how some women berate their husband among others! (Are they surprised when they then learn of a subsequent affair with one who made them feel special? Not justified, but understandable...)

11] His head is as the most fine gold, his locks are bushy, and black as a raven.

Gold: value, not color.

Raven: frequently used in the Scripture to remind us of God's provision (Job 38:41; 1 Kgs 17:2-6).

12] His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and fitly set.

Doves: fidelity; faithful for life. (Acceptable in the Old Testament for sacrifice.)

[Didn't your wedding vows include an everlasting commitment of loyalty and fidelity until death? God expects us to keep our vows...]

13] His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers; his lips like lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh.

How do you taste to your wife?

14] His hands are as rods of gold set with the beryl; his belly is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires.

[Some fitness club he belongs to! Them are some abs.]

"Rods" from a root meaning circle: fingers. For caressing as well as providing...

Ivory was usually carved, telling a story... (What does yours tell?)

15] His legs are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold: his countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars.

Pillars of dignity and strength.

(Before the battles with the Muslims, Lebanon was legendary in its beauty...)

16] His mouth is most sweet: yea, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.

[Is your mouth sweet? What is your communication with her like?]

"Altogether lovely": Lovely is plural; it intensifies what she is saying. Beloved, indeed!

And "friend": Are you *her* friend? Can she share everything with you, without being judged or attacked? Or do you take her for granted (as I did for so many—too many—years!)

Despite their apparent marital problems, she refrains from criticizing him. (She is still catching those little foxes!)

As the dream comes to an end (6:2) he has returned...

* * *

Chapter 6

Review

This book is intended to improve dying or empty, boring marriages; to increase your love for your spouse; and, to illuminate true sexual and romantic understanding.

Jewish tradition (the Mishnah, the Talmud, and the Targum) viewed the book as an allegorical picture of the love of God for Israel.

Church leaders, including Hippolytus, Origen, Jerome, Athanasius, Augustine, and Bernard of Clairvaux, have viewed the book as an allegory of Christ's love for His bride, the Church.

A third view—the courtship between Christ and the individual believer—will also be explored, especially from this chapter.

Series of Reflections (Fruchtenbaum)

- 1) 1:2-8 Preparing for the Wedding Feast
- 2) 1:9-14 At the Wedding Feast
- 3) 1:15-2:7 In the Bridal Chamber
- 4) 2:8-17 A Springtime Visit
- 5) 3:1-5 Dreams of Separation
- 6) 3:6-11 The Wedding Procession
- 7) 4:1-5:1 The Wedding Night
- 8) 5:2-6:2 Troubled Dream of Love Refused

Review

We have been touching on the literal “marriage manual” view, and the allegorical view of the Bridegroom and his (collective) Church as the Bride. [Fruchtenbaum and Hocking exemplify the first; H. A. Ironside, Hudson Taylor, and Jon Courson, the second.]

Marriage can be tense at times, and for the dumbest of reasons. (In our marriage, it is almost always Nan who takes the initiative to remedy our mutual foolishness....)

A variation of the second view is the *personal* application. There are also classic writings which view the Song of Songs as dealing with the courtship between Christ and the believer *individually*.

Have you turned a deaf ear to Him? Are we like the Ephesians (Rev 2:1-7) in that we are so busy on the business of the King that we have no time for the King? Have we forgotten “our first love”?

In the 17th century, Jeanne Guyon’s commentary on Song of Songs landed her in prison: first in Vincennes, and finally in the infamous Bastille. All previous commentaries had seen the bride as either as the Church or as Israel. Guyon made the book personal, a story of love between believer and Lord. Watchman Nee also focuses on this allegorical view.

A rarely discussed valley of Christian experience is called “The Dark Night of the Soul,” by St. John of the Cross, and is also dealt with by Charles Spurgeon, and Dave Wilkerson, as well as Mme. Guyon. While this issue is significant, here Guyon fails to allow for the fact that it was the Bride that initially expressed a coolness—not the Bridegroom.

My wife, Nan, is writing her next book, *Faith in the Night Seasons*, which will also deal with this little recognized aspect of the faith adventure experience.

Practical Lessons from Chapter 5

- Marital adjustments are always necessary.
- Despite his refusal, Shulamite *refuses to criticize her husband in public*.
- The Daughters of Jerusalem were impressed...

Chapter 6

Whither is Thy Beloved Gone?

- 1] Whither is thy beloved gone, O thou fairest among women? whither is thy beloved turned aside? that we may seek him with thee.

We’re convinced. We will seek Him also.

- 2] My beloved is gone down into his garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies.

As the dream comes to an end (6:2) he has returned! Heb 13:5, “He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”

I am My Beloved’s...

- 3] I am my beloved’s, and my beloved is mine: he feedeth among the lilies.

3X: 2:16 (Have you given yourself to Him?);
6:3 (confirmed);
7:10 (every doubt gone).

An Acrostic?

In the Hebrew, 6:3 reads:

אָתְּ לְדָרוֹיִךְ נְדָרוֹיִךְ לֵי הַרְרֹתֶיךָ בְּשׂוֹמְרוֹיִךְ

which is an acrostic on אֱלוּל Elul, the sixth Jewish month corresponding to August or September, the Month of Preparation for the fall feasts: Feast of Trumpets, Yom Kippur, and Feast of Tabernacles, which, in addition to their commemorative relevance, are also prophetic (Col 2:17) of His Second Coming.. (See *Festivals of Israel* briefing package.)

* * *

Solomon

Solomon is now seen showing *his* unconditional acceptance...

- 4] Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem, terrible as an army with banners.

In their reconciliation the first words of the lover to his beloved were words of praise.

“As beautiful ... as Tirzah”: a lovely oasis which later became the royal residence of four kings of the Northern Kingdom: Baasha, Elah, Zimri, and Omri (1 Kings 14:17; 15:21, 33; 16:8, 15, 23). The name Tirzah means “delightful.”

The beloved was also as lovely as Jerusalem: called “the perfection of beauty.”

Lam 2:15: “All that pass by clap their hands at thee; they hiss and wag their head at the daughter of Jerusalem, saying, Is this the city that men call **The perfection of beauty, The joy of the whole earth?**”

Ps 48:1, 2: “Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness. **Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth,** is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King.”

[“The sides of the north”? Cf. Isa 14:13. *Golgotha north* of the city: Lev 1:11...]

The Beloved's Beauty

He is totally vanquished. The beloved's beauty was so awesome that it unnerved him as if he faced an army with banners.(?) Cf. v.10?

- 5] Turn away thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me: thy hair is as a flock of goats that appear from Gilead.

Her eyes were so stunningly beautiful (cf. Song. 1:15; 4:1) that they overwhelmed him. [*Hiphil* stem: “to press overpoweringly against one, to infuse terror!]

By repeating part of the praise he had given her on their wedding night (4:1-3) he was indirectly telling her that his love for her had not diminished since that first night. It was not based on performance; it was unconditional.

“...goats”: In Israel, Syrian goats are mostly black, with silken hair. On a steep slope, giving the appearance of hanging down on the sides of cliffs. The slopes of Mt. Gilead rising from the Jordan Valley are very bare with a brown-bronze color... Hair is the woman's glory (1 Cor 11:15. Cf. v.14!)

- 6] Thy teeth are as a flock of sheep which go up from the washing, whereof every one beareth twins, and there is not one barren among them.

[For the meaning of the metaphors on her hair . . . teeth, and temples in 6:5-7, review our comments on 4:1-3.]

“Within thy locks” = behind your veil. It was customary for the bride to be veiled on the wedding night (Gen 24:65; 29:21-30).

Hair speaks also of two things: consecration and submission. The Nazarites were not to cut their hair as a sign of their commitment (Num 6:5; Samson: Judges 13:5; 16:5).

Paul alluded to the long hair of a woman as sign that she had placed herself under his covering (1 Cor 11:15).

Sheep, washed, shorn, and white. Matched; none missing... a set of pearls half-hidden in the mouth...

Teeth also speak of our ability to assimilate truth. (Heb 5:12-14).

7] As a piece of a pomegranate are thy temples within thy locks.

Pomegranates: redness, tempered with ruby color. Mentioned over 30X in the Bible. Used as an indication of rank in the hem of the garment (Ex 28:39); and emblazoned on the Temple (1 Kgs 7:2; 2 Kgs 25:17; Jer 52:22). [Is there a “temple” pun here?]

The circular calyx at the end of the fruit's looks like a little crown, and a tradition claims that Solomon used it as a model for the one he wore. The leaves are shiny, dark green; the flowers coral and waxy. The fruits make a syrup called grenadine.

Our temples suggest our thought life. Are our thoughts fruitful and good? Phil 4:8.

8] There are threescore queens, and fourscore concubines, and virgins without number.

This might be simply a rhetorical device. Not that “I have” but that “there are.” 60, 80, ... without number... She’s the best; beyond all others...

[Some use this verse to support the view that Solomon cannot be, thus, a type of Christ in this passage... John Phillips, et al.]

In fact his love and appreciation for her *had grown* since then. He assured her that she was totally unique (6:8-9a) as his dove (cf. 5:2), an opinion shared by her mother (6:9b) and also the maidens (lit., “daughters”), queens, and concubines (v. 9c).

My Dove

9] My dove, my undefiled is but one; she is the only one of her mother, she is the choice one of her that bare her. The daughters saw her, and blessed her; yea, the queens and the concubines, and they praised her.

“Blessed”: *iv'a' ashar*, “make progress,” “to pronounce happy;” “to congratulate.”

On seeing the husband and wife reconciled, the women were amazed at her beauty.

10] Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?

She is likened to the morning dawn.

Of the two Hebrew words for moon, this one emphasizes the whiteness of the moon (rather than other one which emphasizes yellow). Of the two Hebrew words for sun, this one emphasizes warmth, rather than the other which pictures the sun as unwearied.

“Army with banners?” As Solomon did in v. 4, they also liken her beauty to a bannered army going forth confident of victory.

They praised her (v. 9), he said, by stating that she was as fair as the dawn . . . the moon... the sun, and the stars.

11] I went down into the garden of nuts to see the fruits of the valley, and to see whether the vine flourished, and the pomegranates budded.

[“Garden of nuts” (and “chariots” of v.12) I don’t think it refers to Southern California?!]

Verses 11-13 tell the story of the couple’s reconciliation from the beloved’s point of view. She knew that he had “gone down to his garden” (v. 2), so she went there to see if their love was still in bloom (v. 11).

We all need continual reassurances!

As a person would look in the spring for new growth, buds on grape vines, and pomegranate blossoms, so she looked for fresh evidence of their love. When she found him there his first words were words of praise (vv. 4-10), indicating that their love was in fact flourishing.

12] Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib.

One of the most difficult verses in the Bible to interpret is verse 12. The Hebrew can be translated in several ways. Amminadib can also be translated “chariots of my people,” “the noble,” or “my noble people.”

One translation which has much to commend it is this: "I became enraptured, for you placed me on the chariots of the people of the prince."

When the husband's first words in the garden were words of praise, she "became enraptured;" she was beside herself with joy. He then placed her on his own chariot at the head of his entourage.

[The Hebrew and Greek texts place the next verse at the beginning of Chapter 7.]

13] Return, return, O Shulamite; return, return, that we may gaze upon thee. What will ye see in the Shulamite? As it were the company of two armies.

As they left, the inhabitants begged her to stay ("Return"; stated 4X in v. 13) and the lover noted the intensity of their desire to gaze on the Shulamite. The Hebrew word for "gaze" means "to sink oneself into a thing looking at it; to delight (feast) one's eyes in looking at a thing." Thus, "to look deeply in pleasure and for pleasure."

How you gaze...? (v. 13b) is better than "why would you gaze...?" They gazed at her and her beauty, he said, as if they were viewing a graceful dance.

(This is the first use of the term **Shulamite** in the book.) The Hebrew word rendered Shulamite is actually the feminine form of the name Solomon. Thus it means the "Solomoness."

Shulem may be the same as Shunem, a village just north of the Jezreel Valley and mentioned several times in the OT, and today known as Sulam.

[The "r" and the "n" sounds are often interchanged in Hebrew and other Semitic languages.) It was a town of the tribe of Issachar (Josh 19:17-18) located at the foot of the Hill of Moreh, also known as the Little Hemon.]

It was known for its beautiful women:

Abishag was a Shunamite (1 Kings 1:3, 4).
Elisha's hostess also lived there (2 Kings 4:8-11).

The Dance of Manhanaim (7:1-5)

מִיְּחֹלָה *micholah*, dancing, dance.

מַחֲנֵה *machaneh* [216x: camp 136x, host 61x, company 6x, tents 5x, armies 4x, bands 2x, battle 1x, drove 1x; thus, an encampment; those who encamp; company; body of people.]

[Also, the town of Mahanaim, ("two camps"); may be somehow associated here with the dance, though the point of the association is not clear: Mahanaim was east of the Jordan River where Jacob met the angels (Gen 32:1-2); it was also where David fled from Absalom (2 Sam 17:24).]

It appears to refer to an erotic dance, during which Solomon details the beauties of his wife:

Chapter 7

The Praise Continues

In Chapter 4, he started at the top, and stopped at her breasts. Here, he starts at her feet, and gets even more intimate.

1] How beautiful are thy feet with sandals, O prince's daughter! the curves (vibrations) of thy thighs are like jewels, the work of the hands of an artist (or cunning workman).

The Hebrew word translated "feet" signifies "step and foot," portraying her as dancing with her feet gong back and forth.

In describing the vibrations of her dancing thighs, Solomon points to the manifold twistings and windings of the upper part of her body by means of the thigh joints, for the Hebrew words signify movements of a circular kind.

The Hebrew word translated "curves" refers to the thighs in motion and not the beauty curves of the thighs at rest. The entire Hebrew passage points towards a dancing female.

The thighs in motion are described as jewels. The Hebrew word signifies female ornaments consisting of gold, silver, and precious stones. The

figure seems to be suggesting the bending of thighs and loins full of life and beauty like the free swinging of such ornaments when connected to a chain.

- 2] Thy navel is like a round goblet, which lacketh not mingled wine: thy belly is like an heap of wheat set about with lilies.

The navel is described in the shape of a half moon with the roundness of a basin, the kind of basin used for the mixing of fine wines. [Some suggest that this is really referring to her genitals.]

The belly or waist is a “heap of wheat” points to the color of her flesh, a mixture of wheat yellow along with some lily white.

- 3] Thy two breasts are like two young roes (fauns), twins of a gazelle.

[Just as in 4:5.]

- 4] Thy neck is as a tower of ivory; thine eyes like the pools in Heshbon, by the gates of Bar Rabbim: thy nose is as the tower of Lebanon which looketh toward Damascus.

Her eyes like pools; her nose well defined.

[Analysis excerpted from Fruchtenbaum.]

- 5] Thine head upon thee is like Carmel, and the flowing locks of your head like purple; the king is captive in the tresses.

Her head is majestic; her hair red-purple. Solomon is totally captivated by her—a prisoner in her tresses.

The dancing ends and lovemaking begins in 7:6-9. (On the majesty of Mount Carmel see Isa 35:2; Jer 46:18.)

* * *

There are many vestiges of the ancient wedding customs, which included parallels to what is pictured here.

In the week succeeding the marriage, the villagers assemble; a thrashing-board is set up as a throne, on which the newly married pair take their seats as “king” and “queen”; there are songs of the physical charms of

the pair, and dances, in which the bride and bridegroom take part; including a “sword dance,” performed by the bride with a naked sword in one hand. The bridegroom is sometimes called “Solomon” as an imaginative designation of a person of ideal beauty, etc.

[Syrian wedding customs, *The Jewish Encyclopedia* (Funk and Wagnalls, London 1905); also, Cf. Judges 14:10-12; Jer 16:9; Ps 19:6; Matt 25:1ff.]

Suggested Lessons

Need for continual creativity in marriage. Ruts are to be avoided; overcome. All things permissible if agreeable to both parties.

[Session 7: Continuing from Session 6]

Following the erotic dance, lovemaking begins.

- 6] How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love, for delights!

- 7] This thy stature is like to a palm tree, and thy breasts to clusters of grapes.

The Hebrew word תַּמָּר *tamar*, translated “palm tree,” or date palm, refers to the flower out of which develops large clusters clusters of juicy sweet fruit.

The Hebrew word עֲשְׂקוֹל *eshkol*, “clusters,” refers to the dark brown or golden yellow cluster which grows at the summit of the branches and beautifies the appearance of the palm tree. (Joshua and Caleb, carrying the “Grapes of Eshkol” are the symbol of the Ministry of Tourism in Israel.)

- 8] I said, I will go up to the palm tree, I will take hold of the boughs thereof: now also thy breasts shall be as clusters of the vine, and the smell of thy nose like apples:

- 9] And the roof of thy mouth [palate] like the best wine for my beloved, that goeth down sweetly, causing the lips of those that are asleep to speak. [or, “moving the lips of the sleeping.”]

(Like the song, “Kisses sweeter than wine.”)

- 10] I am my beloved’s, and his desire is toward [or upon] me.

Three Stages of Commitment

During courtship, **security**:

2:16 My beloved is mine, and I am his:

After the marriage, **submission**:

6:3 I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine:

During adjustment periods and their accompanying doubts, **stability**:

7:10 I am my beloved's, and his desire is toward me.

Application

It has been suggested that this passage is encouraging creativity in sexual relations; couples should not allow themselves to get into a rut in this or any other aspect of their lives. No kind of sexual activity between a married couple is sinful or unclean as long as it is acceptable to both parties. Many marital tensions derive from an inappropriate prudishness and misunderstanding in this area. Denial on the one hand, and imposition on the other, are two limits to be avoided.

11] Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field; let us lodge in the villages.

A longing for home; or a desire for a recreational break—a weekend away! We all need that occasional respite.

12] Let us get up early to the vineyards; let us see if the vine flourish, whether the tender grape appear, and the pomegranates bud forth: there will I give thee my loves.

Ostensibly, a return to the region of their original courtship.

“Loves” is the Hebrew *dod*, and is in the plural, referring to sexual loves.

[“vine has budded” = their relationship?]

13] The mandrakes give a smell, and at our gates are all manner of pleasant fruits, new and old, which I have laid up for thee, O my beloved.

Mandrakes are in flower and giving off a fragrance. The Hebrew word for mandrakes is *דוד* *dod*, from the same root as sexual love, as exciting sexual desire, and favoring procreation. Mandrakes are known as the “lover’s flower,” and also as “love apples.” (The Arabs call them the “Devil’s apples.”) It is a whitish green flower with yellow apples the size of nutmeg and has a strong and pleasant odor. The fruits and roots were used as an aphrodisiac and were thought to stimulate sexual arousal.

[They are also the background of Genesis 30:14-16.]

Most authorities regard their reputation as fanciful. Some associate them with the *Mandragora officinarum*, but it has no definite scent. Some argue that the plant must be the *Cirrus medica*, the Citron.

Chapter 8

Up to Galilee

[So we head up to the Galilee, with the mandrakes blooming...]

1] O that thou wert as my brother, that sucked the breasts of my mother! when I should find thee without, I would kiss thee; yea, I should not be despised.

Desiring to express affection without restraint. In the ancient Near East public displays of affection were frowned on except in the case of certain family members. Thus the beloved wished that her husband were... Like a brother to her so that it would be acceptable to display her affection for him at any time.

2] I would lead thee, and bring thee into my mother's house, who would instruct me: I would cause thee to drink of spiced wine of the juice of my pomegranate.

Despite her lover's previously expressed complete satisfaction, she still seeks to learn and improve. The beloved playfully assumed the role of an older sister.

“I would lead thee”: (the verb is always used of a superior leading an inferior); she even assumes the role of the mother. The lady of the house would give special wine to the guests. So the beloved shared the characteristics of a sister, an older sister, and a mother in her relationship

to her husband. The Song also portrays the lovers as friends (cf. 5:1, 16). Thus the lovers had a multifaceted relationship.

- 3] His left hand should be under my head, and his right hand should embrace me. . . .and instruction continues.

- 4] I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, until he please.

[Remember: this is a choral work.]

The now familiar refrain, slightly altered.

- 2:7 in the context of marriage;
3:5 in the context of courtship;
8:4 here in the proper place.

Sexual passion should not be aroused in any place where cannot—or shouldn't—be satisfied (Cf. 1 Cor 7:5).

Application(s)

- 1) As before, creativity in nurturing the relationship.
- 2) Notice how often Shulamite takes the initiative in the relationship. She is not on a performance basis, yet this stimulates her toward continual refinement and improvement. Expressing unconditional love should not lead to complacency.
- 3) Sexual passion should not be aroused where it cannot be satisfied. (What does this imply for sexually oriented movies? No place for a believing Christian.)
- 4) The value of “getaway” weekends—without the kids, etc. Creative time alone together is essential.

Who Comes Up from the Wilderness?

- 5] Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved? I raised thee up under the apple tree: there thy mother brought thee forth: there she brought thee forth that bare thee.

The question starts out in the same way as 3:6 and 6:10, and is always in reference to Shulamite.

Seen “coming up from the wilderness” suggests that they left Jerusalem via the Jericho Road, came up the Jordan Valley, and left the wilderness by coming through the Beth Shean Pass to Shunem. This would be the same route she took when going up to Jerusalem in the wedding procession.

The **wilderness** or desert had two symbolic associations in the Old Testament.

- 1) The wilderness was associated with Israel's 40-year period of trial. In their love the couple had overcome trials which threatened their relationship (e.g., the insecurity of the beloved, 1:5-6; the foxes, 2:15; and indifference, 5:2-7).

- 2) The desert or wilderness was used as an image of God's curse (cf. Jer 22:6; Joel 2:3). The couple's coming up out of the wilderness suggests that in a certain sense they had overcome the curse of disharmony pronounced on Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:16b).

Coming to the apple tree where she first won his love, they now renew their love covenant in vv. 6 & 7.

The Seal

- 6] Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame.

A **seal** or signet ring was the emblem of authority (cf. Gen 41:42; 1 Kgs 21:8), worn on the right hand (Jer 22:24) or against the heart by a string from the neck (Gen 38:18). It was a jewel from which one did not separate himself; a most prized possession.

Love (here, *ahavah*) embraces both *dod*, and *ra'eydih*, plus much more.

The energy of this love is compared to the energy of death and Sheol: “strong” means powerful; irresistible (Num 13:28; Judg 14:18; Jer 9:21). The jealousy of love is [hard, cruel, firm] as Sheol: jealousy, here, is simply asserting the right of possession or ownership, just as Sheol takes full possession of the dead (Psalm 49:13-15).

Jealousy also burns against every one who will try to violate the right of ownership. She hides in this jealousy as security against any unfaith-

fulness... Love of the right kind is a flame kindled not by man but by God: the “flame of Jehovah,” in Hebrew, a flame of the most vehement kind. [This is the only place in this book where God is mentioned.]

7] Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned.

This kind of love cannot be extinguished nor drowned; it is inextinguishable. Nor can this love be purchased, and any attempt to buy it would be scorned and viewed as madness.

Application

A periodic celebration—and renewal—of the love covenant is a good thing. Be creative. Some have a second wedding ceremony; others return to their place of original courtship; a renewal of the love covenant before the Lord is never out of order.

The Sister

Returning home she converses with her brothers about their little sister:

[or a flashback?]

8] We have a little sister, and she hath no breasts: what shall we do for our sister in the day when she shall be spoken for?

Referring to Younger years.

“The day when she shall be spoken for” refers to the day when suitors come courting (1 Sam 25:39).

The Brothers Answer

9] If she be a wall, we will build upon her a palace of silver: and if she be a door, we will inclose her with boards of cedar.

In the ancient world, brothers often served as the nearest guardians and counselors of the sister; in the area of marriage, often had precedence over the father and mother (Gen 24:50-60; 34:1-17). The Hebrew word for “wall” is the one chosen that implies a wall that stands firm and withstands every assault against it. She will be rewarded for chastity.

If she proves to be like a door, they will bar it with planks of cedar. They will not give her an opportunity for promiscuity.

She Responds

10] I am a wall, and my breasts like towers: then was I in his eyes as one that found favour.

Her breasts, unlike her sister’s, were fully developed and ready, like towers; but only for her husband. She maintained her virginity and purity.

She now begins to see the reason behind what seemed like harsh treatment by her brothers earlier—simply attempting to maintain her purity. Should not this faithful guardianship by her brothers be rewarded?

She Now Turns to Solomon

11] Solomon had a vineyard at Baalhamon; he let out the vineyard unto keepers; every one for the fruit thereof was to bring a thousand pieces of silver.

She reminds Solomon that he owns nearby vineyards which earn 1000 pieces of silver from his tenants.

12] My vineyard, which is mine, is before me: thou, O Solomon, must have a thousand, and those that keep the fruit thereof two hundred.

Her own vineyard—protected by her brothers—is also nearby (which also explains the supervision of vv. 9, 10, and 1:6).

Solomon “has his thousand”—Shulamite herself. Her brothers were keepers of her—as his “vineyard”—and are also entitled to the earnings of 20%.

[Gematria possibility? Thousand...]

13] Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the companions hearken to thy voice: cause me to hear it.

He responds favorably (and may also be asking for a song...)

14] Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like to a roe or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices.

“Make haste”: flee, so we can again be alone.

Repeating in invitation similar to 2:17, but this time unlimited...

As she begins her song, and they go outside to do what they planned in the earlier reflections (7:12-13, 8:1) and disappear into the flower hills,

...the Song of Songs comes an end.

[The Book of Isaiah follows this book in our Bible.]

* * *

Applications

Diligence and discipline to preserve chastity prior to marriage, on the one hand; and openness, intimacy, and creativity within the marriage, on the other.

The Song of Songs shows that sex in marriage is not “dirty.” The physical attractiveness of a man and woman for each other and the fulfillment of those longings in marriage are natural and honorable.

But the book does more than extol physical attraction between the sexes. It also honors pleasing qualities in the lovers’ personalities.

Also moral purity before marriage is praised (e.g., Song 4:12). Premarital sex has no place in God’s plans (2:7; 3:5). Faithfulness before and after marriage is expected and is honored (6:3; 7:10; 8:12). Such faithfulness in marital love beautifully pictures God’s love for and commitment to His people.

Recourse When “Under Attack”

1. Prayer: Matthew 26:41
2. The Bible: Psalm 119:9-11
3. The Holy Spirit: Galatians 5:16
4. Our Spouse: 1 Corinthians 7:1-5.

Proper attitudes among the parents also are a major—if unseen— influence upon the children.

Next Time

A recap of alternative views of the book, including a number of very different allegorical interpretations.

One of these may come as a very disturbing (prophetic) surprise.

[Read 1 Kings 11.]

* * *

Session 8 Concluding Perspectives

Summary

It is perhaps the most difficult and mysterious book in the entire Bible. Scholars differ widely on the structure of the Song—its unity or lack of it—the nature of its metaphors, and the nature of the love extolled by the Song. In short, almost every verse has been the subject of lively debate by the Song’s interpreters.

S. Craig Glickman quotes a volume written on the history of the Song of Songs during the Middle Ages:

“Over five hundred commentaries on the song remain with us from the first seventeen hundred years alone. Yet after these five hundred and perhaps more, the Westminster Assembly observed in 1657 that the commentaries customarily increased the cloud of obscurity they had hoped to remove.” [Glickman, p. 173]

A glance at the Song’s history of interpretation reveals a diversity of opinion unequalled in the study of any other book of the Bible.

The Song has been Interpreted As

- (a) an allegory,
- (b) an extended type,
- (c) a drama involving either two or three main characters,

- (d) a collection of Syrian wedding songs (a view held by E. Renan, J. Weizstein, Umberto Cassuto, and others) in which the groom played the role of a king and the bride played the role of a queen, and an anthology of disconnected songs extolling human love (held by Robert Gordis).
- (e) an anthology of disconnected songs extolling human love (held by Robert Gordis).

Jewish tradition (the Mishnah, the Talmud, and the Targum) viewed the book as an allegorical picture of the love of God for Israel. Cf. Hosea and Gomer.

Church leaders, including Hippolytus, Origen, Jerome, Athanasius, Augustine, and Bernard of Clairvaux have viewed the book as an allegory of Christ's love for His bride, the Church. Eph 5, et al.

Is It Inspired?

It is book about lovmaking from an author who had 700 wives and 300 concubines (women who took his heart away from the Lord, 1 Kings 11:1-4). This book *is* inspired; it was part of the Scriptures when Jesus Christ was here on the earth. He put His imprimatur on the entire volume when He said:

Psalm 40:7 - "Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me." (q.v. Heb 10:7)

John 5:39 - "Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me."

John 10:35 - "The Scripture cannot be broken."

It was the favorite book of D.L. Moody, C.H. Spurgeon, and St. John of the Cross. John Gill, a Puritan preacher, developed 122 sermons from it; Bernard of Clairvaux, a French mystic, brought forth 86 teachings from Chapter 1 alone.

Some say that it is not quoted in the NT, yet there are fragments everywhere:

"The well of living water" (John 4)

"The veiled woman" (1 Cor 11)

"The precious fruit" (Jas 5:7)

"The spotless bride" (Eph 5:27)

- "Unquenchable love" (1 Cor 13:8)
- "Love strong as death" (John 15:13)
- "Ointment poured forth" (John 12:3)
- "Draw me" (John 6:44)
- "The Shepherd leading His flock" (John 10:4, 5, 27)
- "Fruits of righteousness" (Phil 1:11).

It is an extremely difficult book to teach because it is so personal. It needs to be. And like a diamond, it has many facets, and each one reveals a unique beauty...

2 Tim 3:16 - "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." But what are *this* book's lessons?

Solomon's Song

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

The repetition of the noun in the genitive makes it a superlative. *The* song, surpassing all other songs (Cf. Holy of Holies, King of Kings, etc.).

Solomon is mentioned by name in **six** (?) other verses: Song of Songs 1:5, 3:7, 9, 11; 8:11-12.

As Israel's third king, Solomon ruled from 971 to 931 B.C. Solomon was perhaps more gifted with literary skill than any other king of Israel for he wrote 3,000 proverbs and 1,005 songs (1 Kings 4:32). It is appropriate that a subject as wonderful as romantic love is described in sublime language by a competent human author, writing of course under the Holy Spirit's inspiration. It's interesting that, of the more than 1,000 songs Solomon wrote, only this one was designed by God to be included in the Biblical canon.

The Story Behind the Opera

In the mountain district of Ephraim, King Solomon had a vineyard (8:11), and he let it out to an Ephraimite family as keepers.

The husband and father were apparently passed away, but there was a mother and at least two sons and two daughters. The older daughter, called the Shulamite, is the "Cinderella" of the piece.

Her brothers did not appreciate her and foisted hard tasks upon her, denying her the privileges that a growing girl might have expected in a Jewish home. “My mother’s sons were angry with me.” (Half-brothers?)

“Mine own vineyard I have not kept.” No opportunity to look after herself. She was sunburned, but naturally comely.

One day she encounters a handsome stranger-shepherd, who views her as without blemish. Friendship ripens to affection, and finally, love. He promises to return and make her his bride.

Her brothers, skeptical, regard her as deceived by this stranger.

He is gone a long time. She would dream of him in the darkness; she trusted him.

One day a glorious cavalcade arrives, and the attendants announce, “The King has sent for you.” In obedience, she responds. When she looks into the face of the King, behold the King was the shepherd who had won her heart: “I am by beloved’s, and his desire is toward me.”

[Fruchtenbaum: *Shulamite* in Hebrew is merely the feminine form of the masculine name of Solomon. The story is of “Mr. and Mrs. Solomon.”]

This appears to be consistent to the Biblical presentation—from Genesis to Revelation—of the Shepherd who came from heaven’s highest glory down to this dark world that He might woo and win a bride for Himself. He went away, but He said, “I will come again, and receive you unto Myself.”

There is also some disagreement over the bride in this love song, summarized by three major views about the woman:

- 1) She is one of his wives (and it isn’t important to know her identity);
- 2) She is the daughter of Pharaoh (1 Kings 3:1; 7:8; 9:16; S of S 1:9)
- 3) She is Abishag (1 Kings 1:1-4; 2:13-25).

The daughter-of-Pharaoh view makes her a Gentle woman, an appealing conjecture for those favoring an Church-oriented allegorical interpretation. However, Pharaoh’s daughter was more likely simply a political link to guarantee peace and good relations between the two countries.

Abishag

Abishag was a beautiful young woman who spent her youth working in the fields and vineyards and was selected to lie beside the elderly King David and serve his needs during his dying years. She came from an area called Shunnam, presumably in the Galilee. (Attempts to locate the historical site have proven fruitless.)

The text is clear that her virginity was not taken away by the elderly King David (1 Kings 1:4). Her ministry to him was completely a matter of physical care, not sexual pleasure.

Solomon, part of the household at that time, became deeply attached to her. When his brother Adonijah tried to get his mother’s approval for taking Abishag to wife (since he lost the kingdom to Solomon) Solomon was enraged and had Benaiah his executioner kill Adonijah (1 Kgs 2:21-25).

Abishag was not a lady of the courts—she was a country girl. She worked in the fields under the hot sun and was not used to expensive clothes and the exotics of the nobility. But she was a natural beauty (like my Nan!)

Alternative Interpretations

The Literal View: A Marriage Manual

There are those (Arnold Fruchtenbaum; David Hocking, et al.) who feel that this lyric poem deals only with subject of Biblical lovemaking. [This has been the intended “center line” for our exploration of the book.]

The love relationship between a man and a woman—the courtship, the wedding night, and the subsequent sexual adjustments of the young couple—all are fruitfully treated. So explicit are these aspects that because of its erotic content, the rabbis forbade the book to be read by anyone under the age of 30.

Indeed, of all the many books on marriage that are available in Christian and secular bookstores, none of them can possibly improve on the Biblical teaching found in this Song of Songs. Here is romantic love for married couples that exceeds our greatest dreams and expectations. Here is a manual on sex that beats all secular viewpoints on how a man

and a woman should make love. There is no way to escape the fact that this book is quite sensual. Glickman summarized it this way:

“Sensual love with erotic overtones is God’s intent for the marriage relationship. The distortion of that relationship has no doubt abased this dimension of love, but that does not justify placing such experience—or Scripture’s Song about it—into the inactive file of living.” [Glickman, p. 9]

The secular world has drowned us with its encouragements toward illicit affairs, easy divorce, the glories of promiscuity and joys of adulterous relationships. While critical of Christian viewpoints, it has done nothing to improve our marriages nor satisfy the longings of our hearts. The exploitation of sex—and the disavowal of the marriage and the family itself in our culture—has sown the wind and we now are reaping the whirlwind.

The Marriage: God’s Model of Intimacy—Ephesians 5

The Role of the Wife

22] Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.

God has ordained government; also, in the home. In submitting to the husband, the wife is submitting to the Lord (Cf. 1 Cor 11:3; Col 3:18; Tit 2:5; 1 Pet 3:1ff).

Alternatives:

- Eve usurped the place of Adam and introduced sin into the human race.
- False cults are frequently started by women.
- Women who leave their appointed sphere can wreck a local church, break up a marriage, and can destroy a home.

In contrast, there is nothing more attractive than a woman fulfilling the role that God has assigned her (Prov 31:10-31).

23] For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.

He is her head. Headship is not dictatorship. He loves, leads, guides, provides, protects, and cares for her.

24] Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.

The Bride of Christ is not an equal partner; does not seek to nullify the role that God has ordained. [Cf. “Women’s Lib...”]

This is another reason that a Christian must not become “unequally yoked together” with an unbeliever (2 Cor 6:14-18).

But next comes the *quid pro quo*:

The Role of the Husband

25] Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;

[Paul had much more to say to Christian husbands than to the wives!]

No wife would mind being subject to a husband who loves her as Christ loves the church.

26] That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,

“Already ye are clean because of the Word...” (John 15:3).

“Sanctify them through thy Truth...” (John 17:17).

27] That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

Sanctify means “to set apart.” The wife is to be “set apart.” Any interference with this God-given arrangement is sin.

28] So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.

“Own”: (6X, vv.22-23).

29] For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:

Love is the nourishment of the home and family.

The Spirit of God uses the Word of God to work in our lives. For a parallel passage to the Ephesians passage read Col 3:16-25.

- 30] For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.
 31] For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.

Quotes Gen 2:24. [Quoted 3X in NT: Mt 19:5,6; Mk 10:8; 1 Cor 6:16]

Involves “leaving” as well as “cleaving.” Man’s relationship to parents superseded by a higher loyalty to his wife. This should eliminate in-law troubles on the one hand; marital strife on the other.

- 33] Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife [see] that she reverence [her] husband.

Only Two Rules, One for Each

Wife: Let your husband be in charge.

Husband: Love your wife supremely.

It’s so simple. Why don’t we do it?

* * *

But there are also three “Allegorical Views”:

Allegorical View #1: [Rabbinical]

A common view among both Jewish (and some Christian evangelicals) is the *allegorical* view that some see the Song of Songs as representing God’s love for Israel.

(Israel is, indeed, portrayed as the “wife” of Yaweh in Hosea, Isaiah, Ezekiel, et al.)

Hosea: Israel = the adulterous wife (Cf. Isa 49:18; 61:10; 62:5; Cf. Joel 2:16, who is the bride?)

Allegorical View #2: [Traditional Evangelical]

Others see it as a “type” of Christ’s love for the Church (H. A. Ironside, Hudson Taylor, Jon Courson, et al.)

All Scripture speaks in some way of the glory and beauty of our Messiah (Psalm 40:7; Luke 24:44).

John the Baptist, the last of the Old Testament prophets, recognized Christ as the Bridegroom (Joh 3:29), as Christ Himself also claimed (Mt 9:15). Paul goes even further (Eph 5:22-32).

Revelation 18:23; 21:2, 9; 22:17. [Having reviewed Ephesians 5:22-31, we then encounter Paul’s ellipsis... Eph 5:32: *This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.*]

Just about the time you think you know where Paul is heading, he seems to throw us a curve: he reverses the parallelism and focuses on the Church, using the marriage as a model to communicate His highest truths!

The Four Bases of Marriage

- 1) **Biological Basis:** for procreation, etc.
- 2) **Psychological Basis:** a union to meet life’s challenges, joys, sorrows, etc.
- 3) **Sociological Basis:** the family unit as the primary element of the tribe, community, nation, etc.

The Lack of Love in America

The love of many will grow cold (Mt 24:12). The most basic form of government is the family. Family serves as the seedbed for virtues. The research is in: divorce is a disaster for the kids.

The attack on the family is a major agenda item in today’s pagan culture. [Heterosexuals reproduce; homosexuals recruit.]

But there is a Fourth Basis, often overlooked:

- 4) **Supernatural/Spiritual Basis:** God’s ordained unit through which He communicates His most significant truths.

Preminnence: Christ is the Head of the Church: Ephesians 1:22; 4:15; 5:23; Colossians 1:18; 2:19.

Preciousness of the His People:

Deut 32:10 “Apple of His Eye”;
Isa 62:3 Crown of Glory;
Zech 9:16 Stones of crown, ensign;
Mal 3:17 Jewels;
Eph 5:25.

Love for the Church: Eph 1:15; Phil 4:1; 1Thess 2:8; 1Peter 1:22; 1John 5:2. Church = “Bride”: Isa 62:5; II Cor 1:1-2; Rev. 21:2; 22:17.

[The New Jerusalem also has the names of the 12 tribes on its gates; Rev 21:12]

Marriage as “Prophetic Types”

Authority: Hosea 12:10

1) Genesis 22 & 24: **Abraham & Isaac** (Gen 22); Isaac edited out of record from offering until Gen 24:62.

Isaac & Rebekah (Gen 24); Unseen commitment until Well of *Lahai-Roi*

2) **Ruth & Boaz:**

Boaz = Goel, Kinsman-Redeemer;
Ruth = Gentile Bride;
Naomi = Israel (Redemption of the Land, etc.)

3) Hosea: **Israel as “wife of YHWH”** (Hos 2:14-23)

Harlot: Ezek 16:35
“Widowed”: Lam 1:1; Isa 54:4
Cf. “I am no widow” (Mystery Babylon) Rev 18:7

4) **Cana:** (“3rd Day” = Tuesday, “Double Blessing” of Gen 1:9-13)

5) **Adam as a type of Christ** (Rom 5:14)
vs. Christ = “Last Adam” (1 Cor 15:45)

Adam not deceived: 1 Tim 2:14; [vs. “Gal, are you in a lot of trouble...”]

Adam loved Eve so much as to *knowingly choose* to share her in her destiny! ...to be made sin for her (2 Cor 5:21).

...without which, there would have been no redeemer, the “Seed of the Woman.”

[Do you love *your* wife that much?]

Gentile Brides as Types

Adam	Eve
Isaac	Rebekah
Joseph	Asenath
Moses	Zipporah
Salmon	Rahab
Boaz	Ruth

[each have no death recorded]

Ancient Jewish Marriage

(Missler, Chuck, and Young, Woody, *Countdown to Eternity*, Joy Pub., 1992, pp.175-191.)

Shiddukhin (engagement)

...arranged by the father!

Ketubah (the covenant, or agreement)

Bridegroom then absent to build the house (John 14:2, 3)

Taken in the middle of the night...Marriage!

Huppah (wedding ceremony); seven-day celebration

[Concerning the mystical union of the Body of Christ, Cf. 5:31; Eph 2:15; John 17:... et al]

* * *

Allegorical View #3: The Triangle View

What is the historical narrative underlying the opera?

Two, or a Triangle?

A key factor—even among those who take the text quite literally—is whether there are two or three characters in the book. Over 100 years ago, Ewald, the great German critic who has been called the father of “higher” criticism, suggested the following view:

In the hill country north of Jerusalem there was a family in charge of a vineyard belonging to King Solomon. The young shepherdess had been won by a shepherd who had drawn her heart to himself and they were intending to marry.

But King Solomon, as he rode along the lane one day, saw this young shepherdess in the vineyard, and his heart went out to her. He determined to win her for himself, and so tried by blandishments to stir up her affections. But she was true to her sylvan admirer.

Ultimately the King has her taken to his palace, to the royal harem, and there again he pressed his suit and tried to win her from her shepherd lover in the hills.

Sometimes she was almost tempted to yield, for her case seemed a hopeless one, but then she would remember her former lover, and she would say, “No, I cannot turn from him. I am my beloved’s, and his desire is toward me.” Eventually King Solomon sets her free and she is returned to the one she loved.

This view has been widely accepted among some, but I initially rejected it (considering its source). Although indulged by many liberal theologians, this view would seem to maintain a low view of the Biblical narrative.

Also, this view would dismiss some of the most lovely and tender passages of this little book as mere seduction instead of sincere and holy love. Cynicism would thus replace the very passages that have thrilled readers through the centuries. It reduces the erotic scenes to premarital lust rather than the beauty of sexual relations *within* marriage.

This would make King Solomon the “villain” of the piece. While he did, indeed, in his later years, fail miserably, he would seem to be portrayed in a positive light: Matthew 6:29: “And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.”

Matthew 12:42: “The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.”

...or was he? He seems to be a base line that is eclipsed in comparisons...

The More Sinister Construction: Solomon as a Darker Type

Solomon was born of Bathsheba, to whom David had no right. Although *not* in the line of succession, Adonijah, David’s fourth son, it seems, was heir expectant to the throne (1 Kgs 2:15, 22; 2 Sam 3:3,4), for Amnon, Absalom, and probably Chitliab, were dead.

So while David was on his deathbed, and before Solomon was formally anointed king, Adonijah plotted to seize the kingdom, but the plot was thwarted by Nathan the prophet. Solomon was generous in his treatment of Adonijah, but he persisted in his effort to steal the throne and it was not long till he suffered death.

David vs. Solomon

What did each “ask for?”

Solomon: at Gibeon (1 Kgs 3:4), where the Tabernacle and Brazen Altar were at the time—about 10 miles NW of Jerusalem (where the Ark was), God invited Solomon to ask for whatever he would. He asked for wisdom to govern his people. That pleased God and God richly rewarded him (1 Kgs 3:10-12).

Books: Proverbs? [Yet, also Ecclesiastes? = All is Vanity.]

What did David “ask for”? Fellowship, communion: Psalm 23:6, et al.

In contrast with a conventional view, David was extolled—Christ is presented as the “Son of David” (never Solomon).

Solomon: He is always a basis for (derogatory) contrast.

History of Solomon

Solomon inherited the throne of what became the most powerful kingdom then existent. He made a deal with he King of Tyre to use his navy in the Mediterranean, and imported cargoes from all over the world (including Britain). He had his own navy at Ezion-Geber (north end of the Gulf Agaba, on the Red Sea). He controlled the trade route south through Edom to the coasts of Arabia, India and Africa. (Ruins have been found there of Solomon's smelters, furnaces, crucibles and refineries; copper and iron ore deposits; dishes, nails, spearheads, fishhooks were manufactured for ivory and gold...)

In the outside world it was the age of Homer, the beginning of Greek history. Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon were, at the time, weak. Israel was the most powerful kingdom on earth; Jerusalem was the most magnificent city; and the Temple the most splendid building. The Queen of Sheba traveled to see for herself: "The half was not told me."

Israel had been promised prosperity in response to obedience: Deut 28:1-14.

Spiritual

What is the Biblical *spiritual* perspective?

Solomon took foreign wives (vs. Deut 7:3-4).

1 Kings 10...

1 Kings 11 (1)

1] Strange, foreign, women (Neh 13:26]

2] forbidden...

4] vs. David...

5] Occultic worship

9] Lord appears twice

He had 700 wives and 300 concubines (!). They were idolaters, daughters of heathen princes, wedded for the sake of political alliances. Heathen altars were reestablished in the palace: markers on the road to ruin.

God's account of it intended to be an example of what luxury and ceaseless rounds of pleasure will do to even the best of men. [Cf. America vs. its heritage...]

Other Results?

Occultic Source: Masonic rites rooted in Solomon's day?

"Dark knowledge"?

- 1 Kings 10:1 hard questions
- Queen of Sheba: no spirit within her (v.5)
- Dan 8:23: understanding dark sentences [Moses not in dark sayings: Num 12:7]

666: 1 Kings 10:14; 2 Chr 9:13 (Rev 13:18)

Re: visit of Queen of Sheba?

Magen David or "Seal of Solomon"?

The Jewish *Magen David*

The familiar hexagram has been associated with Judaism only relatively recently. As an abstract figure is shows up very early places. It also has an occultic background.

It seems to have been used by Druids, the religious order among the Celts. [Reifman, *Hashahar*, Vol II, pp. 435ff.]

The Jewish equivalent of the Pythagorean Pentagram... deemed with occultic magical powers... used by many cultures, even some national flags... only gradually associated with Jewishness... *Magen David* misunderstood: The true shield of David was God Himself...

Even in the 20th century it was still vigorously opposed by some Viennese savant Moritz Güdemann expressed his disdain:

"Men of Jewish learning cannot accept the fact the Jewish people would dig out of their attic of superstition a symbol or emblem that it shares with stables..." [*Monatsschrift für Geschichte*, etc. vol. 60 (1916) p. 139]

Six steps (1 Kings 11:19) two lions/"stay"?"

3027 ⇨ *yad*, a primitive word; TWOT - 844; n f Ø AV - hand 1359, by 44, consecrate + 04390 14, him 14, power 12, them 11, places 8, tenons 6, thee 6, coast 6, side 5, misc 129; 1614 Ø

1) hand

- a) hand (of man)
- b) strength, power (fig.)
- c) side (of land), part, portion (metaph.) (fig.)
- d) various special, technical senses
 - 1) sign, monument
 - 2) part, fractional part, share
 - 3) time, repetition
 - 4) axle-trees, axle
 - 5) **stays**, support (for laver)
 - 6) tenons (in tabernacle)
 - 7) a phallus, a hand (meaning unsure)
 - 8) wrists

Two lions on each “stay”; total of 12: Or is there, here, a hint of the “Seal of Solomon?”

Ezek 28:3 Antichrist: Wiser than Daniel (!)...

Recap: the Darker Triangle View...

Solomon: a type, courting the bride... vs.

The (Chief) Shepherd who wins the Bride.

The Bride-to-be: tempted, but faithful to her Shepherd...

The Coming World Leader:

a man of peace, prosperity...

The False Prophet:

Global [“Christian”] Religion

The Woman that rides the Beast...

The Remnant to be “returned” to her Shepherd-Redeemer...

[Also, on the fringe: the role of Gematria “Thousand”?]

Conclusion

[Cf. The Seven Letters to Seven Churches: four levels of meaning (at least)...] There is more to be gleaned from Song of Songs... by the Holy Spirit and you ...

* * *

Appendix:

Broken Families

[Excerpted: Barbara Dafoe Whitehead, “Dan Quayle was Right,” *Atlantic Monthly*, (April 1993).]

Postwar generation: 80% grew up in a family with two biological parents who were married to each other.

vs.

1980s: less than 50% expect to spend their entire childhood in an intact family. An increasing number of children will experience family breakup two or even three times during childhood. (These are the young parents now on their way.)

Scientific evidence demonstrates that children in disrupted families do worse than those of intact families:

- 6 times more likely to be poor;
- 22% of one parent families will experience poverty during childhood for seven years or more, ... vs 2% of children in two-parent families.

1988 study, National Center for Health Statistics: Children of single parent families:

- 3 times as likely to have emotional and behavioral problems.

More likely to drop out of high school, get pregnant as teenagers, abuse drugs, or be in trouble with the law. Also higher risk for physical or sexual abuse.

Less likely to be successful as adults: especially in love and in work.

Harder time achieving intimacy in a relationship, forming a stable marriage, or even holding a steady job.

Teen suicide rate has tripled; juvenile crime has increased and become more violent; school performance has continued to decline.

National policies contribute to family instability and breakup. Divorce is the public acknowledgement of failure.

Problem since the 1960s: *After the Supreme Court outlawed mentioning God in schools.*

Divorce: 10/1000; then sudden growth to (1979) 23/1000. Since 1974 it exceeds death as leading cause of family breakup.

1990: 1 out of 4 women had a child outside marriage.

Half of all marriages now end in divorce. Remarried couples are more likely to break up than couples in first marriages (56%).

1 in 4 children in the 1990s will eventually enter a stepfamily.

Hollywood celebrates divorce and unwed motherhood. Federal policy celebrates social and sexual variance.

The “Me” Generation

Fewer than half of all adult Americans today regard the idea of sacrifice for others as a positive moral value.

The adult quest for freedom, independence, and choice in family relationships conflicts with a child's developmental needs for stability, constancy, harmony, and permanence in family life.

Welfare dependency tends to be passed on from one generation to the next. Daughters of single parents are:

- 53% more likely to marry as teenagers;
- 111% more likely to have children as teenagers;
- 164% more likely to have premarital birth;
- 92% more likely to dissolve their own marriages.

Each divorce is the death of a small civilization. It inflicts wounds that never heal.

Survey after survey demonstrates that Americans are less inclined than they were a generation ago to value sexual fidelity, lifelong marriage, and parenthood as worthwhile personal goals.

* * *

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About The Cover Design

(on the tape cassette volumes)

The “Front” cover:

The Greek border: “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty (Revelation 1:8).” The center design element symbolizes the Word of God Incarnate, illuminated by the Holy Spirit.

The “Back” cover: (the “front” to the Jewish reader)

The Hebrew border: “Hear O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might (from the Sh’ma, Deut 6:4-5).”

The center design represents the Burning Bush, made up of Hebrew letters which proclaim “the Eternal One cannot lie.”

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