

Song of Solomon

Original Historical Setting

Author: Solomon

Written: ~965 B.C.

Audience: First audience was the Israelite people who came to admire the wisdom of their great king Solomon.

Occasion: An actual account between Solomon and an unnamed Shulamite woman; or possibly a general wedding poem used by others.

Timeline:

~970 BC – Solomon begins his reign over Israel

~930 BC – Solomon dies

World Events that occur simultaneously

~950 B.C – Rustproof iron invented

~950 B.C. – Peanuts traced back to this time in Brazil and Peru

~950 B.C. – Hiram I, king of Tyre, joined two islands and built an impregnable city in the sea.

Genre/Literary style

Wisdom literature composed in Hebrew poetry

Features and Structure

- The book of Song of Solomon was originally a song, even though the musical notations have not survived. In Hebrew, to distinguish who is speaking (the bride or groom or friends) the gender and number in certain verbs and pronouns change. In many translations they have added subheadings to clarify the changes for us.
- Ch **1:1-3:5** –The Courtship
Ch **3:6-5:1** –The Wedding
Ch **5:2-8:4** – The Maturing Process
Ch **8:5--8:14** – Final reflection

Key text(s)

2:1 – the rose of Sharon

2:16, 6:3, 7:10 – I am my beloved's

What to look for

- Even though the Song of Solomon contains many metaphors (that may be difficult for a westerner to understand) describing physical attraction and various actions relating to intimacy that include various Oriental euphemisms and *double entendres*, one can still appreciate the beauty of the poetry as it portrays appropriate and Godly love in marriage.
- Appreciate the fact that in a world that views sex so sordidly and perverts it so persistently; God saw fit to give His endorsement of true, marital love as wholesome and pure.
- To help with knowing who is speaking, usually “my love” or “love” or refers to the bride and “my beloved” or “beloved” refers to the groom.

Interesting facts

- The book of Song of Solomon is so passionate in its portrayal of physical intimacy that a Jewish boy was forbidden to read it until after the age of 13. Origen and Jerome tell us that many Jews would not permit their young men to read it until they were thirty years old.
- Although according to 1 Kings 4:32 King Solomon wrote 1005 songs, this is considered the greatest, therefore it is also referred to as Song of Songs.
- The Song of Solomon (along with Esther) does not contain the name of God.
- Geoffrey Chaucer's, *The Canterbury Tales*, makes numerous references to the book of Song of Solomon which I know you read in high school, right?

Memory Verse: Song of Solomon 8:6